

FIFTEENTH EDITION.

*Albert B. Ramsdell,
Salem, Mass.*

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"CALIFORNIA KIT" DICK FAMILY YELLED IN AN ECSTASY OF DELIGHT.

OR, DEADWOOD DICK JR'S DEFIANCE.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "ROSEBUD
BOB," "DENVER DOLL," "SIERRA SAM,"
"DEADWOOD DICK, JR.," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A TETE-A-TETE.

BOZEMAN, MONTANA.

I suppose nearly all who see this romance have seen the name, or heard of it, for Bozeman is a town of about the second size in the territory wherein it is located.

Of course it is not as largely populated as the capital, Helena, its not far-distant neighbor; nevertheless, it is a wide-awake, live and bustling place, and a sort of head-center for sports and sporting people.

It has many comely, and even elegant residences—as far as elegance goes in the far-Western meaning—and among the best of these was that of a local banker, Maurice Mansfield.

It was a frame residence of modern design and conveniences, and within was quite richly furnished, for the Banker of Bozeman, as Mr. Mansfield was sometimes called, was a man of good taste and judgment, and his capital being literally unlimited, he spared no pains or expense to make his home both elegant and cheerful.

One mellow September evening, when the picturesque town was swathed in the light of the soaring full moon, the Mansfield parlor was brilliantly lighted, and its magnificent furnishings showed off with striking effect.

By the open casement sat a young gentleman and lady, chatting pleasantly, as they watched the crowd that surged to and fro along the street.

The young lady was between seventeen and eighteen years of age, petite of figure and pretty of face. She had a round, delicately-chiseled face, of most sweet and winning expression. When she smiled her hazel eyes sparkled with animation, and she slightly exposed to view two rows of pearly teeth with charming effect.

Her hair was of a sunny hue, and most becomingly arranged; and altogether she was a beauty one would little expect to find in that far-off Montana town; for, not only was she pretty, but was well educated and charming of address.

The young gentleman was a gracefully formed youth of perhaps eighteen, smooth-faced, handsome and well-dressed.

His countenance was round and rosy, and yet, with its habitual expression of good-nature and cool unconcern, it also betokened that decision of character which underlies an iron will.

He was just such a good-looking, dashing young fellow as girls of a susceptible age are wont to admire, and it appeared evident that the young lady now seated facing him was most favorably impressed.

"It is two weeks to-night, Mr. Neville," she was saying, "since you so bravely rescued me from the outlaws, the Black Band of Bozeman, isn't it?"

"Yes, Miss Mansfield, I believe it is."

"And it was so brave of you, too," she went on, earnestly. "Do you know, there is scarcely anything I admire so much as bravery? I think if everybody were brave and self-reliant, there would be far less crime. But, tell me, Mr. Neville, how do you like Bozeman, and the position papa gave you, as cashier in the bank?"

"I am quite favorably impressed with the town, thank you—that is, what I have seen of it," young Neville replied; "and, as for my position, I also like that, quite well, despite the fact that it seems a little awkward to me, as I have not been used to being housed up, so closely. You know I have been somewhat of a rover."

"Oh! yes, but it is so much nicer to have an easy indoor business. Papa tells me you get along famously, and I am sure we are both glad to do all we can for you."

"I am already assured of that, Miss Mansfield; indeed, you have done too much for me, who am a total stranger to you both. I feel ashamed to accept of your many kindnesses, and it was, as you know, only on the most urgent persuasion that I was induced to enter your father's employ. It is a fact I cannot deny, that I feel guilty in occupying the position I do."

"Why, Mr. Neville, how strangely you talk! What do you mean—why do you feel guilty?"

"Because neither you nor your father know anything of my past life. Did you, I am satisfied you would not look upon me with the favor you do now. Another thing, my dear Miss Mansfield, I would speak of—when I came here, this evening, I came to tell you frankly that—that—"

"Why, what, Mr. Neville?"

"That our acquaintance should cease!"

"Why, Mr. Neville! How strangely you talk!"

"I but speak my honest convictions, dear lady."

"But, pray explain. Believe me, sir, I cannot understand your meaning."

"I will try," Neville said, a trace of emotion in his voice, while he gazed absently out of the vine-embowered window. "In the first place, I am not worthy of the society of one so pure

and innocent as your charming self, nor am I worthy of the position of trust I occupy, in your father's employ!"

"Oh! sir, say not so, for I cannot believe it!"

"Yet, it is nevertheless a fact. I have tried to honorably discharge my duties in Mr. Mansfield's employ, and shall continue to do so, the few days I yet remain with him; but I have at last been forced to come to the conclusion, that some one is working against me, and planning to injure me. I am not positive who it is, but I have a faint idea."

"Who?"

"I prefer to mention no names."

"Is it any one in father's employ?"

"Possibly—possibly not!"

"It surely cannot be father's partner, John Jasper?"

"Most likely not, as I have never seen that gentleman. You will remember he has not been up from Sphinx, since I have been in Bozeman."

"True. I had forgotten that. I don't like John Jasper very well. Let me see: It must be my cousin, then—Percy Pierce, father's book-keeper. He is the only one employed at the bank, besides yourself."

Ned Neville made no reply to the suggestion, but said:

"We will change the subject, as it matters but little, as I shall leave Bozeman, shortly, anyhow."

"Oh! do not say so, Mr. Neville! I am sure we should be very sorry to lose you."

"Because you do not know anything of me, or my past, Miss Mansfield. It is a dark page, which is liable to be exposed to the light at almost any minute. For this reason our acquaintance should cease. I would not willingly have your fair name in any way unfavorably connected with mine, and thus be disgraced!"

"Oh! Mr. Neville, do not talk so. Have I not invited you here several times, and have I not treated you cordially?"

"All too cordially, Miss Mansfield, considering that I am a stranger, with a blank past. You have insisted upon my spending several evenings in your society, to the exclusion of a suitor for your hand; you have insisted upon my taking several strolls with you, and you have been a daily caller at the bank, where you seldom were seen to go before I came. All this, you must know is creating comment, which should by all means be avoided!"

"And why, Mr. Neville? I believe I am privileged to go when and where I please, and associate with whom I choose!"

"That may all be, but it is not prudent. Had you always known me, it would be different, perhaps. But, as it is, a cloud hovers over my life that may burst at any minute, and involve me in a vortex of disgrace, which you would more or less share, were we still on intimate terms. So, it is imperatively necessary that we be as strangers after to-night!"

He had spoke earnestly and with evident deep feeling.

Mabel Mansfield did not make a reply for several minutes. Her face was averted toward the window, and there was a strange, passionate light burning in her eyes.

"I see how it is," she said, directly, a faint, perceptible tremor in her voice. "You prefer Madeline's society to mine."

Ned Neville looked his surprise.

"Why, Miss Mansfield, you do me an injustice," he said. "I have never been in Miss Madeline's society at all, except when she came to the bank, and drew me into a conversation."

"That has been quite often, I understand!" sarcastically.

"Well, yes—quite oftener than I could have wished, let me assure you, Miss Mabel. It becomes me, in self-defense, to say that Madeline has not created the most favorable impression upon me from the time you introduced me to her. But I trust you will let that go no further."

"Then, do you like me better than you do her?" Mabel asked, with child-like simplicity, as she leaned toward him and gazed into his frank, handsome face, with those deep, soulful eyes of hers.

What Neville's reply might have been is hard to say, for just then a door opened, and Mr. Mansfield entered the parlor.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANKER'S WRATH.

MAURICE MANSFIELD was a large and portly man of five and forty years, with a massive and full-bearded face of decided expression, bright brown eyes, and hair of a similar shade.

He was well preserved for his years, and a man

to make a favorable impression upon a first meeting.

He dressed with plain, business-like taste, and apparently was not in the least addicted to affectation or arrogance, because of his wealth.

He bowed on entering the parlor, and drawing an easy-chair near the couple at the window, became seated.

"My young people, I see, are having a chat," he remarked with a grave air, "which I must interrupt, however, for I have something of importance to say to Mr. Neville."

"To me, sir?" Ned asked, half suspecting what the import of that something would be.

"Yes, sir. I really have not had the time to have a good talk with you since you entered my employ, owing to the fact perhaps that my daughter appears to have monopolized the most of your attention, after office hours. Mr. Neville, would you mind giving me good insight into your past history—say for two or three years back, since you have grown up?"

Ned Neville felt that he was turning red and white, all at the same time, as he heard this question.

"Why, I—I do not think my history would prove of any interest to you, sir," he replied, rather hesitatingly. "Indeed, I would prefer not to say anything about my past life, sir. This may seem strange to you, but I have reasons for desiring it to remain a dead letter!"

"Indeed! Ahem! Well, I have frequently observed you, when you were unaware of the fact, and I have formed the conclusion that you were nursing a secret. Such being the case, I marvel that you had the—well, the audacity to accept a position of trust, in my employ!"

Ned's cheeks flushed rosier than were their usual wont, at this.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" he spoke up, with spirit, "but I think you will remember that it was at the earnest solicitation of your daughter and yourself, I accepted the position—for I had a mission, sir, to fulfill, and would much rather have gone on my way. However, as there was a possibility that I could attend to that matter, and at the same time serve you, I finally concluded to do so."

"I was just telling your daughter, however, that I should leave Bozeman, within a few days."

"Indeed! Well, now, I am not quite so sure about that, Mr. Neville!"

"Sir!"

"Just as I say. I am not quite so sure that you will be permitted to go!"

The banker spoke quite significantly.

"Indeed, sir, I do not understand why!"

"Well, I will endeavor to enlighten you. When I took you into my employ, it was more as a reward of merit for saving my daughter than anything else, not because I trusted you any more than I would any other stranger, albeit you had rather an honest countenance."

"To-day, my book keeper complained that his accounts wouldn't balance with yours, and I ordered him to make a close examination of the cash, which he did, this evening, and he finds a defalcation of two thousand dollars, over and above what canceled paper has been turned over to him."

Neville uttered a cry of surprise.

"This is very strange, sir," he said, quickly. "What money I paid out I received checks for, and turned them over to Pierce after canceling them. What deposits were made were entered respectively in the pass-books of the depositors, and also upon my memoranda, which was also turned over to Pierce. I am no thief, sir, nor will I stand being accused as one!"

"Gently! gently, young man! No one has yet accused you of being a thief; but you had the handling of the cash, and should be able to account for the shortage."

"But I am not, and know nothing about it, sir—nothing whatever, upon my word of honor!"

"Well, I should perhaps be inclined to believe you, but for your reticence in regard to your past. As it is, I can but regard you with suspicion. However, I propose to be as lenient as possible in consideration of another matter."

"Since your advent in Bozeman, Neville, you and my daughter have been much in each other's society—so much so, in fact, that it has, I hear, created comment. I have been blind in the matter, and never taken the second thought of what the consequences might be, until to-day a rumor reached my ears that fairly stunned me—a rumor neither creditable to you nor Mabel!"

"Oh! papa!" cried Mabel, greatly agitated.

"Mr. Mansfield, I am astounded!" exclaimed Neville.

"I haven't a doubt you are, for I was also."

Nevertheless, the rumor is a thing of existence, as sure as we sit here together, and I am greatly troubled about it.

"I do not know who started it, but I do know that I would rather see my daughter lying in her coffin than that her fair name should ever have been sullied, in the least!"

The banker here arose and paced the floor, greatly excited.

Mabel had buried her pretty face in her hands, and was weeping softly.

Ned Neville sat upon his chair literally thunderstruck.

"Mr. Mansfield, this is terrible," he said, "and I will assure you that I am fully as sorry as yourself that anything of the sort has happened. Not less sorry am I that I yielded to your daughter's earnest solicitations for me to call upon her. Believe me, I should have refused, but for the fact that it would have been discourteous. However, I have always conducted myself as an honorable gentleman."

"No doubt about it, sir—not the least. But it is too late to be sorry about it now—too late! You know what slander is. It is a hydra-headed, imperishable demon, with a thousand forked tongues. I curse the day you ever came to Bozeman, sir! Better a hundred times would it have been, had my child not been rescued by you from the outlaws!"

"Oh! papa, do not say that!" sobbed Mabel. "Mr. Neville is not to blame, nor am I."

"Silence! You need not now speak. Of course you are to blame, and so was Neville. He is old enough to have known his place."

"But, papa, it was me who insisted upon Mr. Neville's calling."

"So much the bigger fool you. You might have foreseen the consequences."

And the banker strode from one end of the room to the other now, in a fearful passion.

Ned Neville did not feel called upon to say any more, for in truth he did not know what to say.

He sat with his face buried in his hands, wishing over and over again that he had never seen the town of Bozeman.

Suddenly he became aware that the banker had paused in front of him, and he raised his head.

"Boy!" Mr. Mansfield said, in a stern but husky tone, "there is but one alternative in this matter, to in a measure avoid everlasting disgrace. You must marry my daughter!"

Ned Neville started violently.

"Marry your daughter, sir?" he gasped, turning very pale, and staggering to his feet—"marry your daughter, sir?"

"Yes, marry my daughter, and that, too, this very night."

"But that is impossible, sir."

"Impossible?"

"Yes, sir. I have never entertained for Miss Mabel anything but ordinary friendship."

"That matters not; you must marry her. You have been directly or indirectly the cause of bringing disgrace upon her fair name, and you must marry her, or—"

"Or what?"

"Go to jail, on the charge of robbery. And, once in jail, I'll see you don't get out for one while."

"I cannot help that, sir. It is morally impossible for me to contract a marriage with Miss Mabel. I am sincerely sorry for what has happened, but I cannot help matters any."

"Tell me *why* can you not marry her, and thus avert the disgrace?"

"Because, sir, I love and am betrothed to another!"

For a moment the banker glared madly at the young man; then, turning quickly, strode across the room, and threw open the door.

"Come!" he said, grimly.

And in answer to his command, there strode into the room the deputy sheriff of the town, and a posse of five aides!

"Arrest that young man!" Maurice Mansfield cried, pointing to Neville. "He has robbed my bank of two thousand dollars in money."

CHAPTER III.

IN DURANCE VILE.

As Ned Neville saw the deputy-sheriff and posse file into the room, he stood for a moment irresolute, undecided how to act. It would be next to useless for him to resist arrest, that he knew.

There was one avenue of escape—the window at which he and Mabel had been sitting; but when he gave a glance at the weeping girl, a spirit of pity entered his heart, and he muttered:

"No! I'll not prove myself a coward before her, but submit to arrest!"

The next instant, however, came a spirit of defiance, that said to him:

"No! you must not submit to arrest, for the one you love is calling to you for help!"

He wheeled, and took a quick stride toward the window, bent upon making his escape.

It was of no use, however.

A head and pair of shoulders rose into view above the window-sill; a pair of cocked revolvers were leveled at Ned, while a cool voice said:

"Not this eve, young feller—some other eve!"

Foiled at escape in this direction, the young man turned to face his enemies.

"Edward Neville!" said the deputy-sheriff advancing, "I am Phil Peters, deputy-sheriff, and I have an order for your arrest; so I'll trouble you to surrender!"

"Not the least trouble, at all!" Ned replied, coolly. "Lead ahead, and I will follow!"

"Oh! no, me daisy. We ain't in the habit o' doin' bizness in that way, you see. We shall have to put the bracelets on ye!"

"Oh! papa! papa! do not have him arrested!" pleaded Mabel, rising and approaching her father. "Oh! do not have him arrested, for my sake!"

"Nonsense! Go to your room!" Maurice Mansfield replied, with severity.

"I won't! I won't!" Mabel cried, stamping her foot upon the carpeted floor, impetuously.

"If you have Mr. Neville arrested, I'll run away, and you'll never see me again."

"We'll see about that!" the banker said, and seizing her by the arm, he thrust her into an adjoining room, and locked the door."

Ned Neville was by this time handcuffed, and marched from the Mansfield residence, with the deputy on one side of him, and a burly aide upon the other.

Bozeman's jail, or "freezer," as it was most popularly known, was but a small affair, containing but one cell, with grated windows, and a sort of office, occupied by the turnkey.

To this office Ned was first conducted.

Maurice Mansfield had accompanied the posse, his face still dark with subdued passion.

"Search the prisoner well, Peters," he ordered, when the office of the "freezer" was reached. "He's been pilfering from me ever since he has been in my employ, and no doubt you will find a large sum of money about him."

"You're a liar!" Ned cried, defiantly. "I never appropriated a cent of your money. But, now, since I see what sort of a man you are, I hope some sharp will fleece you out of every cent you've got. It won't be well for you, if I ever get out of jail—just please remember that!"

"You'll not get out very soon!" the banker, allowed, with quiet significance.

The work of disarming Ned of a pistol he carried, and of searching him, occupied but a few minutes, but no money except a few silver pieces, was found, and a scrap of paper.

"Hello! what's this?" demanded Phil Peters, who could not read, or write.

The banker seized the paper, and read aloud.

"DEADWOOD DICK, JUNIOR.

"Frank With Friends, Fearless of Foes!"

"BEWARE OF THE CRIMSON CRESCENT!"

"Ha! what does this mean?" he demanded, turning to young Neville.

"None of your business!" was the prompt response.

"I reckon, boss, that's this young chap's autograph," spoke up a miner. "Ef ye recollect, ther used ter be an ornery dare-devil chap, named Deadwood Dick, who traveled all through ther minin' country, an cut, slashed an' robbed folks, like fury. I've hearn tell as he got salivated at last, tho', an' mebbe this young feller he's stepped inter his shoes, an' is tryin' ter imitate his example!"

"No doubt of it, at all," the banker agreed, "for he was afraid to tell me about his past, to-night. Lock him up, and we'll nip his blooming career in the bud, mighty quick."

"Oh! ye won't be lonesome," laughed the turnkey, as he saw Ned give an apprehensive glance toward the grated door of the cell. "Thar's a reg'lar chaw'-em-up in the cage, what kin swaller a man hull. I run him in fer bein' a s'picious character."

The door was then unlocked, and Ned, or Deadwood Dick, Junior, was pushed into the cell, after which the door was closed and fastened, on the office side.

"There!" banker Mansfield said, speaking

through the grating, triumphantly. "You will rusticate in limbo, for one while, young man, unless we conclude to hang you. Deadwood Dick Junior, are you? A would-be thief and road-agent? Very nice, indeed. But, I presume we can cool your ardor for fame, in *that* direction!"

Dick made no reply, but groped his way to one of the hard benches of the cell, and sat down, while the office of the jail was cleared of all persons except the turnkey, who tipped back in his chair, with a yawn, and prepared to go to sleep.

As for Dick he well knew there was no sleep for him, that night. His arrest had fired him with indignation, and he only longed to get free to show his oppressors his defiance and his power.

And right here, it may be well to make a brief explanation.

The readers of the "Deadwood Dick, Jr." romance, will remember that Dick and California Kit had fled from the mining-camp of Bummer's Bar, never to be seen there again, and that Henry Hollis had started in pursuit, in hopes of recovering his daughter.

Well, Dick and Kit had traveled for several weeks, finally bringing up in the flourishing town of Cinnabar, Montana.

As it was a live town, with considerable running excitement, they concluded to tarry there, for awhile, and get married, as they had long since plighted their troth, and loved each other truly; but the first night of their stay in Cinnabar, California Kit mysteriously disappeared, and, for the life of him, Dick could gain no clew as to what had become of her.

He searched high and low, and made thorough inquiries, but could gain no information that would throw any light upon her singular disappearance.

Still, he was not the one to give up hope, and he pursued his search, diligently, visiting all the camps adjacent to Cinnabar.

Finally, he decided to visit Bozeman, and set out.

One afternoon, after he had left the red-hot camp called Sphinx, he picked up a letter, on the trail, which some one had either lost or thrown away.

On examining it, he was much surprised to find that its date was some two weeks previous, and that it was a business letter addressed to Henry Hollis, Bozeman, Montana.

This threw considerable light upon the matter of California Kit's disappearance, Dick thought, and he no longer entertained a doubt but what Kit had been recaptured by her father; so he lost no time in hurrying on toward Bozeman, for he was determined to attempt Kit's rescue, no matter what the risk might be.

Before he reached Bozeman, however, he nearly ran into a temporary outlaws' camp, where a fair young maiden—the Mabel Mansfield of our narrative—was held a captive, bound to a tree.

The outlaws, who numbered a round dozen, were well armed, masked, and attired in somber black, and evidently were camped for the night, or else in waiting to attack some stage-coach from the lower mines.

Nothing daunted Dick made up his mind to effect the maiden's rescue, if possible, and so he hung around the neighborhood.

Late in the evening, eleven of the outlaws mounted their horses, and rode away down the trail, toward Sphinx, leaving the twelfth man to keep watch over the prisoner.

As may be supposed, it did not take Dick long to get away with this guard, and he succeeded in rescuing Mabel without any trouble; and on learning who she was, he took her with him to Bozeman, and restored her to her father.

Mr. Mansfield was greatly overjoyed, and both he and Mabel insisted that Dick should accept the position of cashier in the bank, there being a vacancy at the time.

Dick finally yielded, giving his name as Ned Neville; for, being rather short of money, he hoped to earn a few dollars, at the same time learn something more of the whereabouts of Kittie.

It was thus he was drawn on, to the acquaintance with Mabel, which had terminated so unpleasantly.

He had also been thrown somewhat into the society of Percy and Madeline Pierce, the banker's nephew and niece, for neither of whom he formed any particular liking, although he felt in duty bound to treat them courteously.

Madeline was a coldly handsome young woman, of two or three and twenty; Percy was as like her as a pea, and three or four years her senior.

Dick had not been in the town more than a

couple of days before Madeline manifested by coquettish glances and an attempt to be agreeable, that she was smitten with him, and she had since not let an opportunity pass of letting him know the fact, without saying so in so many words.

Percy Pierce, however, had shown himself of a supercilious and disagreeable disposition, and although they were not declared enemies, it was pretty well understood between Dick and him, that neither liked the other, for Percy had had strong aspirations for Mabel Mansfield's hand, prior to Dick's arrival in Bozeman.

Much to Dick's keen disappointment, he had not been able to find that such a man as Henry Hollis was known in the town, nor had he been able to obtain the least clew regarding California Kit's whereabouts.

He had put this and that together, however, and the suspicion was strong in his mind that the outlaw band from whom he had rescued Mabel Mansfield, and who were locally known as the Black Band of Bozeman, were really the crescent-branded jurors of Bummer's Bar, and that Henry Hollis was in some way connected with them.

Just why such a suspicion should have arisen in his mind, he could not have told; but he could not dismiss the thought, and it had been his intention to leave the banker's employ in a few days, to investigate the matter.

Now, however, he was locked up on a serious charge, for which he had no doubt he was indebted to the banker's nephew, Percy Pierce.

CHAPTER IV. THE BLACK DOZEN.

As he sat in the cheerless cell, pondering over his unenviable position, Dick was suddenly aroused by a gruff voice, coming from the seat, just opposite.

"Hey! hello, thar, rustler, who be yer?" "I be myself!" Dick replied, dryly. "Who be you?"

"None o' yer sass ter me, durn ye, or I'll git up an' bite yer ear off. Yer a younker, ain't ye?"

"A regular baby," Dick answered. "It's only about eighteen years since I first swallowed soothing syrup."

"Cuss yer picter, aire ye tryin' ter poke fun at me remarks! Ef ye are, I'll be doubled-up an' dissected, ef I don't swaller ye hull!"

"You'll have the dyspepsia all yer life if you do. I'm so tough that you'd have to drink vitriol to digest me!"

The party across the way gave a snort of rage. "Who aire ye?—what's yer handle?" he finally asked, in a milder tone.

"Well, you can call me Ned Neville, if you've got any occasion to call me anything."

"Ned Neville, hey? That ain't yer real handle tho'. I heerd 'em callin' ye Deadwood Dick, yender, outside ther cage."

"Well?" "Waal, ef yer him, I'm with yer, tooth-an'-toe-nail. I never had ther honor o' meetin' yer before, but ef ther were ever a double-deck cuss, wi' grid-iron grit, Richard o' Deadwood war ther man. I've heerd more stories 'bout him than would fill a cyclonepeder. Thar was one time when he war pursued by a hundred men, an' got inter cluss quarters. Now what der ye s'pose he did?"

"I don't know, I'm sure." "Waal, I'll tell yer. He whipped out his shooter an' wi' six shots killed ther hull hundred. Now, that's ther sort o' a man as is equal ter pard wi' me, ther great chaw-'em-up, from Chico!"

"That's rather a tough yarn," Dick, Jr., replied. "However, I allow for ther source it came from."

"Ye do, eh? Waal, neow, me gentle zephyr, allow me ter impress upon yer tympanum, thet thet 'ar story trickled right out o' ther fountain-head o' gospel truth. Bug, is my name, sylvan stranger—Napoleon Bug, an' I'm ther charmin' chaw-'em-up, from Chico. I feed on raw meat, an' I parts my hair wid er revolver!"

"You must be a desperate character, indeed!"

"I am, you bet! Even elefants an' buffers run bellerin' away, when they see me comin'!"

"Indeed! What are you doin' in here?"

"Thet's jest w'ot I can't squeeze thru' my noddle, stranger. I hed jest arriv' in town, hungry as a settin' hen, when I spied a hunk o' dried venison a-hangin' outside a grocery store, an' thinkin' ther grocer hed hung et out thar to get et out o' ther way, an' didn't want et, I stepped up ter inspect it, an' see ef et war properly dried, when four chaps seized me by ther arms an' ther useful part o' me trouserloons, an' trotted me off ter this cage, at er polka quick-step. I never war madder in my life, an' I hev

bin chawin' off ther back o' this wooden sofa ter keep me angry speerits frum risin' so high they'd bu'st ther roof off, an' I'd git blistered by ther moonshine!"

Dick concluded by his companion-prisoners' harangue, that he was something of a wag, as well as a "chaw-'em-up," and he did not feel sorry that he had a cell-mate who was glib of tongue, as it helped to pass away time.

So Dick conversed with the "chaw-'em-up" for some time, and found that, at some former period in his existence, he had been pretty well educated, and really was a man of intelligence; but by years of roughing it through the wilds of the mining regions, he had fallen into the rough vernacular style of speech, and it had become a sort of second nature for him to use it.

During their conversation, Dick gleaned the fact that Napoleon Bug never stayed long in one place, but tramped from camp to camp, in search of a man, who, years before, had been his business partner, and had decamped with all the firm's cash, and Bug's wife in the bargain.

No names were mentioned, and Dick did not consider it any of his business to become inquisitive, but he formed the impression that Bug was not really the bullwhacker's name.

"It's a gol-durned shame fer 'em ter lock me in this hyer hyena trap!" the man grumbled, "jest because I war examin'in' thet piece o' venison, wi' a view ter buyin' et. I wonder, younker, ef thar ain't some way we kin break out o' heer, 'cause ef we stay in heer 'til mornin' we'll ketch thunder an' lightnin'!"

"There's a very slim likelihood o' our gittin' out," Dick replied. "This cell is built of stone, and the door is iron."

"Yas, I know that. I had a notion ter chaw some o' them bars off, only I was afraid that ther cuss outside would salivate me wi' his shooter. But, I say, younker, ef you an' I ever git out o' heer, we'll pard tergether, an' paint ther town cardernal!"

"I should presume!" Dick replied, although he really had his doubts if he would care to take on such a partner as the voluble Bug.

Long before it was midnight, the snores of the turnkey announced that he was giving Morpheus a strong embrace, and it was not long after that the "chaw-'em-up" succumbed to silence and repose.

Dick, then, had nothing to do but think, and as may be supposed thought gave him but little satisfaction.

To-morrow, most likely, he would be tried for defalcation, and there could be but little doubt but what Maurice Mansfield would bring all the power to bear against him that he could.

"Oh, Kittie! Kittie!" he murmured, "how I wish I were free, that I might again search for you—for something tells me that you are a prisoner, and maybe a sufferer as well!"

He really loved the girl with youthful fervency, and knowing that his affection was fully reciprocated, it galled his young spirit that he should be held under restraint when he so longed to be free, and in search of her with whom he had been so strangely thrown in contact and mated.

But it was no use to chafe under his bondage, as he well knew, and he finally stretched himself out upon the hard bench, with the intention of trying to get a few hours' sleep, as he had not slept for two nights.

He had scarcely lain down, however, when he heard a rapping on the outside door of the prison.

He instantly arose, and stole to the grated door of his cell, not a little interested.

Napoleon Bug also awakened.

"What's the matter?" he growled.

"Sh! I don't know," Dick replied. "Some one is pounding at the door of the jail. I don't know who it may be."

Bug arose, and hobbled to Dick's side.

He was a tall, lank individual, shabbily clad, and wore a shaggy sandy beard, and possessed a tremendous nose that would have made a Roman feel small.

"Ye don't think—ye—ye don't think it's lynch-ers, do ye?" he demanded, anxiously.

"I don't know; there's no telling, I'm sure. Keep mum, and we'll know before long."

The candle in the office had not yet burned out.

Huffer, the turnkey, still sat tipped back in his chair, sleeping placidly.

The knocking on the door did not appear to disturb his repose in the least, until it increased in force, and a regular tattoo was beat upon the door.

Then Huffer awakened, with a start, and sprung to his feet.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Open the door!" responded a voice from the outside—a very feminine voice, too. "I want to see you."

"Who are you?" growled the turnkey. "I don't receive visitors this hour o' the night, 'cept they're to be locked up!"

"I am Mabel Mansfield. Papa sent me with some refreshments for you."

Huffer hardly believed this, for he was not in the habit of being treated so kindly.

"Pears to me old Mansfield are gittin' mighty clever," he muttered, as he hesitatingly approached the door. "Howsomever, maybe he wants me to keep a close watch on the younker."

He shot back the bolts and swung open the portal.

As he did so a stream of men poured into the office, a dozen all told, and each one masked, clad in somber black and grasping cocked revolvers.

"Good Heaven!" Deadwood Dick, Jr., said, turning to the Chaw-'em-up of Chico. "We're in for it now, old man! Them fellers are the Black Band of Bozeman, and they've come for you and me. Our goose is cooked, sure as there's kick in a mule. See! they've seized the turnkey, and are taking the keys away from him. You'd better get on your knees and pray, Chaw-'em-up, for inside of ten minutes you'll go scootin' up Salt river!"

"I dunno how ter pray," the Chaw-'em-up replied, his teeth chattering. "What der yer say?"

"Now I lay me down to sleep—"

At this juncture the ringleader of the Black Band advanced toward the grated door of the cell, with a large key in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE BAND'S STRONGHOLD.

WITH feelings of no little concern, Deadwood Dick, Junior, saw the Black Band chief approach the cell door, for he well understood the significance of the band's coming.

They had come for him, and not for Napoleon Bug.

Dick was also now fully satisfied that the band were none others than the branded jury of Bummer's Bar, who, having discovered his presence in Bozeman, had taken this opportunity to possess themselves of him when he was powerless.

For handcuffed as he was, what could he do toward protecting himself from any indignities they might offer?

Absolutely nothing.

They could cut his very heart out, and he could not resist; and if they were the branded jury, it would be useless to expect mercy at their hands.

The leader opened the grated door without trouble, then called out:

"Prisoners, come forth!"

Dick marched out promptly.

The Chaw-'em-up of Chico, however, drew back to the innermost recesses of the cell.

"Come out here, you!" thundered the captain. "If you don't I'll have you snaked out by the hair of your head."

This caused Bug to shuffle forth, looking dogged and defiant.

The captain surveyed him keenly through the holes in his mask.

"Who are you?" he demanded, gruffly.

"Napoleon Bug!" was the sullen response.

"Bug, eh? Well, me overgrown Bug, we'll make you creep when we get you to headquarters. Boys, bind the prisoners to the horses."

Dick and Bug were led from the jail, and bound together upon the back of a strong-limbed horse in such a manner that it would be impossible for them to get off.

The rest of the band then mounted, and the cavalcade rode quietly out of the town, which had long since been wrapped in slumber, as it was after midnight, considerably.

Leaving the town at its southern terminus, the band headed in a line that would take them toward Sphinx.

For two hours the journey was kept up at a jog-trot; then the outlaws branched off the main trail, and rode up a mountain ravine.

It was narrow and dark, the craggy sides towering up, precipitously, to great height.

For a mile or more this passage was followed; then the ravine ascended sharply and ended upon a mountain-guarded plateau, where were a number of tents, pitched in a semi-circle.

Besides these was an extremely large two-story log-cabin, which had the appearance of having been built for many years, as it was

partly overgrown by creeping vines, and some of the logs were covered with moss.

As Dick afterward learned, it had once been the winter head-quarters of a number of mountain hunters and prospectors, who pursued their calling in that region.

When this plateau was reached, the outlaws dismounted, and the prisoners were taken to the cabin.

The lower floor was all in one room, and a large one at that.

A number of rude tables and chairs were scattered about, and here and there were skins upon the floor, which probably served as beds.

There were two fire-places, one at either end of the room, and fires blazed in these.

At one side of this room was a counter, and behind it were shelves containing bottles and glasses—in fact, it was a bar after a primitive fashion, that was presided over by a monster negro, who was as ugly and villainous-looking as he was big.

Over the bar was a rudely-lettered cloth sign, bearing the following suggestive legend:

"THIS IS
NIGGER JIM'S.

WHISKY FIFTY CENTS A DRINK.

EXTRA CHARGE FOR PLANTING STIFFS."

It would seem, by this, that Negro James was the boss of the ranch, and that the Black Band of Bozeman were simply his guests.

In the absence of the outlaws, however, it was not apparent how the negro derived an income from his place, except it were from strolling men of the mountains, or unless more outlaws than the Black Band sojourned in the vicinity.

Dick and Bug were conducted into the cabin by the evident captain of the band and another burly fellow.

The other outlaws remained outside, to attend to their horses.

When they were inside the cabin, the prisoners were led to a corner furthest from the door, and ordered to sit down.

"Squat! an' don't dare to budge, if ye don't want yer brains blowed out!" the captain reminded them, menacingly.

He and his companion then went to the bar, behind which the negro presided, all smiles and smirks.

"Ebenin' to youh, boss," he said, rubbing his hands, in evident anticipation of trade. "What can I do for you gen'men, sah?"

"Give us whisky, o' course," the captain growled. "Has any one been here to-day, askin' for me?"

"No, sah! not a libin' soul, sah!"

"Where's the other boys?"

"Deed, I don't know, sah. Dey all mounted deir hosses, sah, an' rode off, sah. As dey took all deir traps wid dem, sah, I se don't s'pect dey intends to come back right off."

The captain uttered an oath.

"They were squealin' 'bout divvy this mornin'," he said, addressing his companion, "and, like enough they've deserted, curse 'em!"

"What matters it, Captain Flynn?" was the reply. "We have all the men we need, anyhow!"

"True!" the captain assented, as he poured out his whisky, "but if they went off huffy, they may give us away."

"I don't think so. They've got onto some other lay, no doubt."

"Yas, sah, dat's what I think," spoke up the negro. "I se hearn one ob 'em say suthin' about a fat trail, sah, but I se didn't pay no 'tention, an' don't know 'zackly what they did say."

"Why the devil didn't you pay attention?" demanded the captain. "What in thunder you good for, anyhow, if you don't keep yer eyes open? Set back that bottle, you black cur, or I'll smash your infernal skull!"

"I se no cur, sah," Nigger Jim replied, complying with the demand, but his black eyes gleaming resentfully. "I se a cullud gen'man, sah."

"Haw! haw! haw! A purty gentleman you are, ye tar-footed idiot!"

"Youh insult me, sah! I don't like dat. I allus treat you 'spectably, sah. 'Sides dat, sah, you already owes me six dollars, sah!"

"Owe you six dollars, you black devil? Why, thunder an' lightnin'! I've mind to jump over that bar, and choke the life clean out of you. Who runs this hyer shebang, I want to know?"

"I does, sah. I was heah, sah, fo' you ebber came."

"Ye do, do ye? Waal, now, jest wait till the rest o' the boys comes in an' we'll see who runs

the shebang! I want you to know I'm Cap Flynn, chief o' the Black Band o' Bozeman! That's ther chap you're lookin' at. And, d'ye suppose I'm goin' to take back talk from a common nigger like you? Nary's the time!" and the captain poured out two more brimmers for himself and companion.

Nigger Jim made no reply, but the whites of his eyes rolled about in a way that suggested how greatly angered he was.

It must be, indeed, a strong man who would want to tackle him, for he stood six-and-a-half feet in his boots, and was more than proportionately heavy, as compared with his height. His muscles bulged out perceptibly, and, all in all, he looked like a bad man to encounter.

"There's going to be trouble here, to-night," Dick whispered to Bug, as the two lay close together in the corner. "The coon's goin' to git laid out, unless I am mistaken."

"Et do look thet way!" Bug admitted, "but, that's not our lookout. We're all-fired likely ter get laid out, ourselves, ef I know a pole-cat from a pond lily."

"I don't know so much about your chances, but mine don't look flourishin', you can bet. You see that man they call Cap Flynn?"

"I does, fer a certainty!"

"Well, he's a bitter enemy of mine, as is all his men, and heavens only knows what torture they intend to put me to."

"Chaw me up inter chowder ef I wouldn't like to see his face!" Bug allowed, grimly.

"Why so?"

"Oh! jest fer fun. I seem to hev heerd thet aire voice afore now, pardner."

"Then, you suspect—"

"Thet he is ther man I have bin s'archin' fer, ever sence I bekim a cavortin' chaw-'em-up!"

"Your partner of former days?"

"Yes, that same!"

At this juncture the door opened, and the other members of the masked band came filing into the cabin.

"Hurrah! boys, come up and have su'thin'!" Cap Flynn called. "Nigger Jim is doin' ther elegant, to-night. Waltz right up an' don't be at all bashful about it."

The outlaws obeyed with alacrity.

"Come! nigger, fill up this bottle again, and set forth the glasses!" Flynn ordered, importantly. "Don't be all winter about et. By ther way, boys, I reckon ther blarsted coon ought ter have a mawling, for, what d'ye think he allowed a bit ago?—thet we, ther famous Black Band o' Bozeman, didn't run this hyer ranch!"

A sullen murmur escaped the crowd, who were anxiously waiting for James to produce the "booze."

"Come, you infernal black-and-tan, ain't you goin' ter set out the whisky?" roared the Captain.

"No, sah, not 'til yous pays me what you owes me—den, I treat de crowd!" Jim replied, promptly.

Flynn uttered an oath.

"D'ye hear thet, boyees?" he fairly howled.

The crowd chorused an assent.

"Then, do two o' ye," the captain went on, "go stand guard over them prisoners, while the rest o' ye give that infernal black cuss the worst poundin' he ever had in his life. Don't stop 'til you've pummeled him all to a jelly. Then, we'll all git gloriously drunk on his bug-juice, what he wanted ter charge me fifty cents a glass fer!"

The crowd gave a yell of assent, and began to pile over the bar, upon the unfortunate negro.

All were strong, able-bodied men, and it looked dubious, indeed, for Nigger Jim.

Two of the outlaws advanced and stood guard over the prisoners.

Man of tremendous physical strength though Nigger Jim was, he was no match for the odds that were now pitted against him.

He fought, however, like a Hercules.

It was greatly to his disadvantage that he had not gotten from behind the bar before the fracas began, for now his assailants had him literally cornered, and every opportunity was afforded them to rain blow after blow in upon him.

Of course such an uneven battle could not last any great length of time, but Dick and Bug were amazed at the amount of pummeling the negro could stand without being knocked out.

He never uttered a cry of pain, but fought fiercely in defense of his life.

It must have been fully ten minutes, and he had already laid out three of the crowd, when he began to show signs of exhaustion.

Blood was running down his face in streams, and it was evident that he could not hold out much longer.

This seemed to give his inhuman foes renewed

energy, and they rained in the blows thicker and faster.

Finally, with a groan, the conquered giant dropped to the floor behind the bar.

He was quickly snaked out into the room, and then that brutal custom of some of the rougher parts of the West began—the horrible "stamping-out" process.

The insensible negro was kicked and stamped upon until he was apparently lifeless; then, only, was it that the Black Band desisted from their terrible brutality, and Negro Jim was raised and pitched headforemost out of doors.

"Nobly done, me daisies!" Captain Flynn cried, as the outlaws returned to the bar. "Now ye can take them 'ar prisoners, an' chuck 'em inter the pit, fer safe-keepin', till we want 'em fer dissectin', after which we will proceed to have a bully time a-drinkin' Nigger Jim's good health."

Accordingly a trap-door in the floor was raised, and a dark hole, some two feet square, was disclosed.

The prisoners were then dragged forward.

"You'll find right comfortable quarters down thar, Mr. Deadwood Dick, Junior!" Captain Flynn said, with a villainous chuckle. "The hunters who used to hev this place used it as an offal vat. When we, the Branded Brows of Bummer's Bar, get ready to perpetrate our vengeance on ye, we'll fish ye out, same as we'd angle fer trout. Chuck 'em down, boyees—chuck 'em down!"

Accordingly the prisoners were tumbled into the pit, from which arose a sickening stench, and the trap was closed down.

The work of drinking Nigger Jim's whisky then began.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ELITE.

THE mining-town of Sphinx, to which we have previously made reference, was about as wide-awake a camp as there was within a hundred miles of Bozeman, except it was Cinnabar, despite the fact that it boasted of a housed population of a hundred and fifty souls. A spur of the Northern Pacific railway had passed through the camp, to the southward to Cinnabar; in consequence Sphinx counted herself one of the coming cities.

As in every camp, where mineral wealth is found in plenty, the human pulse beat high; there was everywhere, on the street and in the saloons and other shops, a feverish state of excitement, and the one theme of conversation, the one all-absorbing interest of the people, was gold.

Every train, and every stage-coach brought in its load of passengers, who were eager seekers after fortune, and wished to investigate their chances at Sphinx, before proceeding on to its more important neighbor, the flourishing town of Cinnabar.

There was a generous supply of gold and silver, at Sphinx, and accordingly, money was plenty, and the places where money could be spent, still more plentiful.

There were saloons, gaming-rooms, and dance-halls, a couple of hotels, and the usual complement of stores, and other places of business.

As usual, the rough element of mining-camps had not given Sphinx the go-by even in preference to the bigger town of Cinnabar. There were roughs, toughs and sharps of every kind, and nearly every nationality, from the polished, white-shirted gambler with his sparkling diamonds, to the most blatant and boastful bully, and the veriest bum. Among other places of resort, in the camp, was The Elite—a gaming room, run on a quiet basis, and which was the best fitted up place, in the camp.

The walls were nicely papered, and hung with sporting pictures; the floor was carpeted with brilliant Brussels, and all the furniture was of mahogany, the chairs being upholstered in crimson plush.

A walnut side-board bar, adorned one end of the room, which was presided over by the proprietor of the place, a young and very dandified individual, known as Chicago Charley.

Rumor had it that Charles had been well-connected, and quite wealthy, in the Western metropolis, but had been obliged to skip, on account of some business trouble that had threatened to send him down to Joliet.

However this might be, he had certainly fitted up The Elite in prime order, and at no little expense, and he catered to the more respectable gambling element of the town, among whom were several of the feminine gender.

One cool October night, several weeks after the occurrence of the events last narrated, and when the first light snow of approaching winter

whitened the ground, The Elite was comfortably well-filled, with devotees to the games of chance.

The lights of the lamp chandeliers burned brightly, and, combined with the bright hues of the carpet, gave forth a pleasing effect.

The clinking of glasses, and the flitting about of a trio of waiter-girls, added zest to the scene.

These waiter-girls were a novelty, of which the Elite alone boasted. They were attractively attired, and evidently were young; but, as the upper parts of their faces were hidden behind ominous black masks their exact ages could not be determined.

This mask business was a matter of Chicago Charley's own get-up; and he would take no girl into his employ who would not conceal the upper portion of her features, and whom he was not satisfied was perfectly respectable, and possessed of the spirit to protect herself from insult.

When questioned on the matter, he would simply say:

"I have a sister, gentlemen, and I would kill the man who would dare to insult her, and I will kill the man who dares to insult these girls, who by force of necessity have entered my employ, and whose identity I have been man enough to screen from the gaping crowd."

That settled it.

Every one knew the blood from Chicago was quick with the pistol; therefore the waiter-girls of The Elite were treated with respect.

For no rough and troublesome tough was tolerated in the gaming-parlor, there always being a herculean "bouncer" at the door, who kept an eye to who entered the place.

The waiter-girls were known as "Lily," "Garnet," and "Nola," but further than this, their identity remained a profound secret.

It was known they had rooms in the hotel adjoining The Elite, which could be reached by a private passageway, so that they did not have to step out into the street.

But, to return to our story.

As before stated, The Elite was well-filled, this chill October evening, and nearly all the card-tables were occupied, while the faro-bank was running at full blast.

It was a noticeable fact that nearly all those present were well dressed, and the conversation carried on over the games was more devoid of profanity than is usually the case in such places.

At one of the tables two men were seated, who were not using cards, but were holding a conversation over a bottle of wine, which one of the waiter-girls had just brought them.

One of the men was Flynn, the chief of the Black Band of Bozeman, minus his mask, and attired in a flashy suit. He wore no beard now, except a close-cropped mustache, and no one who had seen him as the outlaw chief, or as the miner of Bummer's Bar, would have recognized him, now.

The other man was large-framed and portly, and his hair was sprinkled with a few threads of gray. His face was naturally a kindly one in expression, but the pallor of the lower part of it now told that a heavy beard had been removed from it, probably that day.

He was well dressed, and wore a handsome diamond in his shirt-front, and a cluster ring upon his little finger.

"Yes, the deuce is to pay, all around," this individual was saying, rather dubiously, "and I'm between a fret and a stew. Have you no idea how she escaped?"

"None whatever," Flynn replied. "She was locked in one of the second story rooms of the cabin, and the window was nailed down. This had not been disturbed, and the door was still bolted on the outside. I had been in the habit of visiting her once a day, to take her some food, but when I went, two weeks ago to-day, she was gone."

"Why did you not notify me, before?"

"I almost feared to, because I was afraid of your anger; and then, too, I've been searching high and low, in hopes of recapturing her."

"And you tell me this infernal whelp, Deadwood Dick, Junior, also escaped you?"

"The very night of his capture. I put him and his companion in the pit, for temporary safe-keeping, and when we went to haul them out they were gone. There is no mystery about their escape, however, for we found there was a tunnel-like outlet to the pit, opening in a clump of bushes near the cabin, and they escaped through it. We also found the 'stiff' of the nigger, near the outlet, and he no doubt helped them out, and then croaked."

"You've found no trace of the young scoundrel?"

"None, more'n that I've an idear he come this way. Ther boys are layin' loose around the outskirts o' ther camp, an' if they strike his sniff, et will be all up wi' him."

"See that it is. I've great fears that he and my child are once more together."

"Don't you believe it, Hollis!"

"Sh! Don't use that name here. You know I am known as John Jasper."

"Bah! what's the odds?"

"More than a little. I am popular here, and doing well, as John Jasper. Were it known that I was under an alias, it would get to banker Mansfield's ears, and all my chances of further partnership with him would be spoiled."

"If ye'r doin' so well, I'd like some money!" Flynn said, coolly. "I don't propose to work for nothing."

"Your demands are getting too frequent!" Hollis replied, growlingly. "However, wait around here, until Mansfield comes, and I'll make a raise out of him, on the pretext that we must have more money to develop our mine."

"Kerect. I'm allus obligin' when there's any money in the case!" Flynn said, with a chuckle. "The most I'm achin' for, is ter git hold of Deadwood Dick, Junior, again."

And he pulled the slouch hat down further toward his eyes, so as to be sure to hide the brand of the Crimson Crescent, which Deadwood Dick had stamped upon his forehead!

At this juncture, two persons entered the Elite, who, from their strong contrast, attracted immediate attention from those who were gathered about the tables.

CHAPTER VII.

NICKEL-PLATE NED.

THE two persons who entered The Elite were strangers in the camp.

No one in the gilded gaming-room, by any sign or token, betrayed that they recognized them.

The first to enter—for one followed the other, was an old man.

He was tall, and rather spare of figure.

He was attired in a suit of black-broadcloth, of recent make.

A watch-chain dangled at his vest; he wore a choker collar, and a high hat, several years out of date.

In his right hand, he carried a heavy ebony cane.

Little of his face was visible, except his eyes, a part of his forehead, and a large Roman nose, for he wore a long heavy beard, which was as white as snow, and his hair was as white as his beard.

To look at him, one would have taken him to be at least seventy years of age.

The second party was a much younger man—twenty-five or six years old, perhaps.

He was not over medium height, but of athletic build, and quick of movement.

He had a round handsome face, keen brown eyes, and a high forehead.

His hair which fell back upon his shoulders from beneath the rim of a slouch sombrero, was of a very blonde color, and as fine as silk.

His face was also adorned by a graceful curling blonde mustache, and a pointed goatee.

A handsomer looking fellow would not often be encountered, than was this stranger.

But his fine appearance, facially, was not his only attraction. It was his costume that drew the most attention.

Beginning at his feet, he wore a pair of top-boots of finest leather, the ears of which were nickel-plated rings.

Then came a pair of trousers of buckskin cloth, encircled at the waist by a nickel-plated band, or belt, with holsters for revolvers and a knife. These holsters were supplied with the aforesaid weapons, which were also nickel-plated.

He wore a broad-collared white flannel shirt, thrown open at the throat, and a purple velvet coat, the buttons of which had been manufactured from silver pieces, and a heavy double chain reached from the top buttonhole of his pants to a watch-pocket on either side.

Around his hat was also a nickel-plated band. In fact, he was a walking advertisement of nickel-plate, and a most dashing one, too.

He sauntered along, toward the middle of the room, in a nonchalant way, with his hands thrust in his pockets, while his magnetic gaze took in the lively scene that always held the boards at The Elite.

Finally, he paused, and looked from one table to another, as he put the inquiry:

"Gentlemen, I am Nickel-Plate Ned, from Nebraska. Is there any of you disengaged, who

would like to indulge in a game of seven-up, auction, eucher, whist, pinochle, old sledge, or draw poker, for amusement, or profit? If there is, I am at liberty to be skinned!"

The challenge caused the crowd to stare, for it had been uttered with the utmost sangfroid, and indicated pretty good assurance on the part of the speaker.

Henry Hollis, or, as he was known in Sphinx, John Jasper, quickly nudged Flynn.

"You absent yourself—tackle the old man, for instance," he whispered. "I'll soon see whether the young fellow has got any money in him or not."

Flynn accordingly arose and shuffled away, but not until he had given Nickel-Plate Ned a sharp glance, as much as to say, "Who are you?"

"If you will take a seat here, I can, perhaps, accommodate you," Jasper said, touching the sport upon the arm.

"Certainly; thank you," Nickel-Plate Ned responded, seating himself upon the chair Flynn had just vacated. "Anything to pass away a few hours, you know."

"Stranger here?" Jasper inquired, rapping for one of the waiter-girls.

"Oh! yes. Just arrived a bit ago."

"Going to remain long?"

"Uncertain about that. Depends how long it takes me to blow in my boodle."

"You have a boodle, then?"

"Somewhat."

"You came from Nebraska, eh?"

"I should smile."

"What part?"

"Southern."

"In business there?"

"Have a few cattle there."

One of the waiter-girls appeared at this juncture.

"Bring us a fresh pack of cards, Nola," Jasper said, with a winning smile. "This nickel-plated gentleman and I are to try our luck and see whom fortune smiles upon to-night."

"Certainly, Mr. Jasper," Nola said, with a courtesy.

At the same time she gave Nickel-Plate Ned a quick glance through the eye-holes of her mask; her lips parted in a charming smile and she was gone.

Nickel-Plate Ned gazed after her keenly.

"Rather odd these waiter-girls should be masked!" he remarked.

"Simply an outlandish notion of the proprietor," Jasper said. "There's many a man in the room who will give a hundred to see their faces and know who they are. They get numerous presents of money as it is, however."

"Then their identity is not known?"

"No."

Nola soon returned with cards and chips.

"Mr. Charley says if you want a banker, I am at your disposal," she said, hesitatingly; "for there is not so much business doing but what the other girls can attend to it!"

"Charley is very kind," Jasper observed. "Pray be seated."

Nola accordingly seated herself at the table, with Nickel-Plate Ned on her right, and Jasper on her left.

"Poker, I suppose?" Jasper said, as he ran over the deck.

"Yes, that suits me."

"What limit?"

"I am not particular."

Jasper rather stared, but said nothing.

In fact, since coming to Sphinx he had lost nearly all the money he had, except an investment he had made with Maurice Mansfield at Bozeman in the banking business.

"Oh! well, we'll make it a hundred, to start with," he said.

"You may give me twenty fives, Miss Nola."

"Ditto for me," Ned said, laying down two fifties.

The checks were dealt out to them.

Just then a man approached, and tapped Jasper on the shoulder.

"Why, Mansfield, dear boy, how are you?" Jasper exclaimed, quickly rising, and shaking hands with the new-comer, who was none other than the Banker of Bozeman. "Sit right down here, for you are just in the nick of time to get into this game of poker. That was bad news you sent me."

"Bad's no name for it," the banker replied, as he seated himself across the table from Nola. "A hundred's worth of checks, miss. I tell you, Jasper," he went on, apparently unmindful of the presence of Nickel-Plate Ned, "I'm nearly distracted. I wrote you all about the scrape I had with the young scoundrel, Deadwood Dick, Junior, didn't I?"

"You did. I reckon the Black Band fixed him when they took him from the jail."

"I am not so sure about that. I hope so, however. If I ever get sight of him I'll shoot him down at sight. What can have become of my poor silly child is what worries me the most. I do believe she was infatuated with the young ruffian, and has fled, in hopes of finding him."

"No trace of her, eh?"

"Not the least. I have had an extended search made, but can give no clew to her whereabouts, or as to whether she is dead or alive. I have an impression that she came this way, and that is what brought me here."

"She is not here, or I should have seen her."

"That is not the worst of it all," the banker went on. "A week ago my nephew disappeared, with twenty-five thousand dollars—the entire funds of the bank, and the next day his sister Madeline disappeared. So I closed the bank up, and, taking what individual cash I had, I came here."

"Bad; very bad!" Jasper growled. "Can you get no trace of Pierce?"

"None whatever. Had the earth opened and swallowed him, he could not have more completely disappeared."

"Well, gentlemen, is it cards?" Nickel-Plate Ned spoke up. "Time is money in the game of poker."

"That's so," Jasper responded, speaking to Mansfield. "As I've lost everything by the bank fiasco, I must try to retrieve my fortunes at the gaming board."

"You did not lose much by the bank closing," Maurice Mansfield replied, dryly, "for sharing the advances made to develop the mining claim, here in Sphinx, which I hear is utterly worthless, your balance in the bank's stock would have been but a few dollars."

John Jasper made no reply, but his teeth went together firmly enough to evidence that he did not like the shot.

The cards were shuffled, cut and dealt, and the game began.

The first hand was won by Ned, the stake having been fixed at five dollars a corner. There was no betting.

The second hand was a repetition of the first, and won by Ned.

"This is very tame," Jasper growled. "If I can get a decent hand, I'll raise it."

"So will I," from the banker.

But no one had any cards in the third hand, and a discard of four cards was made, all around. It was Nickel-Plate Ned's "say," and he bet two chips.

"Supposing we make this no limit!" Jasper suggested, laying his cards face down upon the table.

"I'm agreeable!" Mansfield assented, after glancing at his cards.

Nickel-Plate Ned ran slowly over his cards, looking very thoughtful.

Then he drew a large roll of bills from his pants pocket, and regarded it, even more thoughtfully.

"Well, I'll stay in," he said, finally. "It may be only a bluff game, after all. Make your bets, gentlemen."

"Give me enough more chips to make me two hundred dollars!" Jasper ordered of Nola.

"Bother with the chips!" spoke up Mansfield. "We are all gentlemen, put down your money!"

It was accordingly done.

"Now, I'll see you, and go you two hundred better," Mansfield said, with a quiet smile, as he made good his bet, in greenbacks.

"Well, I shall have to see the biz, and go five hundred better!" Nickel-Plate Ned responded, coming to time.

Jasper and the Banker of Bozeman exchanged inquiring glances, and the former emptied his pockets, and counted his money out upon the table.

"There!" he said, putting it with the pile—"that's my all, but it is enough to see you, young man, and go you twelve hundred better."

Nickel-Plate Ned made no reply, but a faint smile wreathed his lips, as laid down his cards, took a cigar from his pockets, and lit it, conscious the while that Nola was watching him.

He had caught her in the same act, several times, during the play.

Maurice Mansfield did not make his bet hastily, but first consulted his cards, and then glanced from Jasper to the Nickel-Plate Sport.

"I'd like to know what you gentlemen have," he remarked. "However, it's too late to back out, now."

He counted out a stack of bills, and planked them.

"See Mr. Jasper, and raise him five thousand!" he said, sententiously.

"You evidently want the boodle, quite badly," Ned observed, as he consulted his own resources. "But, I do not think you will get it. I have enough here to cover you. Are you done, Mr. Jasper?"

"Yes."

"Then, Mr. Mansfield, I call you!"

"Four kings!" Mansfield said, laying them down, triumphantly.

"The boodle belongs to me!" Ned said, laying down the four aces, and raking in the stakes.

"Ten thousand curses seize you, you shall not have that money!" Jasper cried, leaping to his feet in a rage, and drawing a self-cocking revolver from his hip-pocket.

At the same instant, the sharp report of a weapon was heard, on the opposite side of the room, followed by a scream of pain!

Had a murder been committed?

CHAPTER VIII.

WREN'S VENGEANCE.

It was the first time since The Elite had been started that a pistol-report had sounded within the gaming-room.

Chicago Charley had given it out in plain terms, on opening the place, that if there was any shooting to be done, he was always on hand and ready to do it.

And as it was a well-known fact that he always went "heeled," there had never been any trouble.

Now, however, the report went echoing the length of the gaming-hall, and men started from their seats excitedly.

What was the matter?

Who had been shot?

It was soon ascertained.

When Captain Flynn left the table whereat Jasper was seated, he had lounged around until he saw a white-bearded stranger take a seat at a table; then he also went and sat down at the same table, and soon the two were engaged at a game of cards.

Now, Flynn lay upon the floor, writhing in the agonies of death, with a bullet-wound in his branded forehead, while the white-bearded stranger had arisen, with a smoking revolver in his grasp.

Just across the room was another tableau.

John Jasper had started up from the card-table, with his revolver half-raised.

At his right sat Nola, the waiter-girl.

She too held a revolver at full-cock, and it was leveled at John Jasper's heart.

"Put up your weapon!" she cried, sternly. "There's one murder, over yonder, but there'll be another if you try any swindling games here in The Elite!"

"Curse you! what do you mean?" Jasper gasped, for her interference took him quite by surprise, seeing that he had flattered himself with having made quite a "mash" on her.

"I mean that Nickel-Plate Ned won the money fairly, and is entitled to it. We don't allow trickery in this resort."

"We don't, eh?"

"No, we don't. Sir!" (to Ned) "you can put the stakes in your pocket."

"I certainly intend to," Ned replied, coolly.

"I am much obliged to you, however, for preventing that chap from using his weapon."

"You appear to have got quite mashed on this silver-plated sucker!" John Jasper sneered, addressing Nola.

"That's none of your business!" she retorted.

"Are you going to put up that tool, or do you want me to wing you?"

With an oath, Jasper put his weapon back in his hip-pocket.

"Now don't let me see you draw that again," Nola said warningly, "or I'll drop you!"

By this time Nickel-Plate Ned had finished storing the money away about his person, and arose to his feet.

"And now, my Christian friend, I have a little bone to pick with you," he said grimly.

"What was that little remark I heard you drop about sucker? Did you mean me, or is there some other silver-plated chap in this institution?"

"Bah! I want no quarrel with you!" Jasper growled, and turning away he strode toward the bar.

"Don't follow him!" Nola said, touching Nickel-Plate Ned on the arm, "for he is not worth making trouble with. I saved you, so don't get into a quarrel with him—for my sake, don't."

"For your sake?"

"Yes."

"And why for your sake? You are a total stranger to me!"

"I know that, nevertheless I took enough interest in you to save your life."

"Who are you?"

"I am called Nola, here. Further than that no one will know who I am as long as I remain at The Elite."

"Well, I am very grateful for your interference, Miss Nola!" Ned said, courteously. "You will excuse me now, as I want to see what the trouble is over there?"

And bowing, he moved away toward the scene of the murder.

A crowd had collected, and Chicago Charley was acting as master of ceremonies.

He was a dashing-looking fellow, who ever dressed with elaborate taste, and possessed a handsome face, a handsome mustache, and a handsome pair of black eyes.

He now confronted the old man, his hand grasping a revolver.

"I want to know the meaning of this affair!" he cried. "Who are you, old man, and what do you mean by coming into my place and shooting down one of my customers? Speak up, quick, before I blow your brains out!"

"I have won the vengeance I've been seeking for, for many a year!" the old man answered slowly. "I recognized in yonder dying wretch one who had bitterly wronged me in the past. So I shot him, as I had sworn to do!"

"Who are you?"

"My name is Wilfred Wren."

"Where do you belong?"

"Anywheres—anywheres in the wide world."

"And you shot this man out of revenge?"

"Yes."

"Well, you have committed a willful murder. Revenge is no excuse for such a crime as this in the eyes of the law."

"Perhaps not," Nickel-Plate Ned interposed, stepping forward; "but as I know this gentleman's story quite well, I can perhaps throw some light upon the matter."

"Very well, sir; say your say!" Chicago Charley replied, seeming to take quite a liking to the sport.

"Well, this man who has been shot," explained Ned, "was formerly the business partner of Mr. Wren in an Eastern city, but decamped with all the money of the firm for parts unknown. And not only did he do this, but he also broke up a happy home, for Wren's wife eloped with him, leaving behind her two little children."

"It was but natural that Wren should swear dire vengeance, and he has carried the oath out to the letter. I suppose few of you know who the dead man really is, or was?"

"No!"

"Well, he was the captain of the Black Band of Bozeman."

This announcement caused a cry of surprise to escape the crowd; for the Black Band of Bozeman had become well known at Sphinx, both from the boldness and the frequency of their depredations.

Stages had been stopped and robbed by them, at almost regular intervals, and lone travelers into the mines had likewise been halted and plundered, and in many instances had been brutally treated by the outlaws.

That the man who now lay a corpse upon the carpeted floor of The Elite gaming-room was really the captain of the ruffians who, within a couple of months' time had made themselves so notorious, seemed hardly credible to the bystanders.

"Are you sure you have not made a mistake about this man's being the outlaw leader?" Chicago Charley said, doubtingly.

"Quite sure—indeed, I am positive!" Ned replied, promptly.

"But how are you sure?"

"Because my friend and I have been on his trail for several days, and knew him well."

"The old man is your friend, then?"

"Yes. We have been pards for some little time!"

"Well, sir, if it is true that the man was the captain of the Black Band, the public has much to thank you for, for running him down. However, that fact does not excuse your companion's crime. He has committed a deliberate murder, and the law will hold him responsible."

"Law be hanged! Western law is not so fine as all that. The man was a black-handed desperado, and as such deserved to be shot."

"That may be your opinion, sir, but all opinions are not alike. Our local deputy-sheriff doesn't happen to be in town to-night; nevertheless, your friend must submit to arrest."

"String the cuss up, without any fuss about it," cried John Jasper. "If he ain't made an

example of, why others of his ilk will come along and do as he has done. Lynch law is the medicine for him. If we don't maintain the right to protect ourselves against assassination, this camp will soon be a regular scene of murder and ruffians' reign."

The crowd within The Elite applauded at this. "Them's words o' sense," cried a man, one of the representative capitalists of the camp. "It is our duty to put a stop to this sort of crime without delay, and I second the motion that the man be strung up at once."

"I third it!" cried another man.

"I fourth it!" from still another.

And then nearly the whole crowd joined in a shout of approval.

"You see the public sentiment is against your friend," Chicago Charley said, turning to Nickel-Plate Ned. "I am not in favor of lynch law, but in these cases the majority rules."

Then he turned to the crowd.

"I don't think it right to talk of lynch law, gents," he said, "for that is fully as unlawful as was the murder itself. I propose, at the least, that the man be given a fair and impartial trial."

"Bah! What's the use of a trial! Don't we all know, an' hain't he admitted himself, that he salivated ther man?" growled John Jasper. I allow that we representative citizens o' this camp ought to have as much say in such matters as you. An' besides all that, this nickel-plated nobody's statement, that the murdered man was captain of the Black Band, is false on its very face, for I have known the deceased for years, and also known that he was a man of honesty and strict integrity. The idea of his being an outlaw, or an associate of outlaws, is preposterous in the extreme. So I say, let's string the old rascal up, at once!"

The crowd gave a cry of assent, and a movement was made to seize the old man, who still stood with the revolver in his grasp, without making any move to protect himself.

But the stern voice of Nickel-Plate Ned checked them.

"Stop!" the young man cried, in ringing tones. "Stop! I say! Lay not a hand on Mr. Wren, or there will be more bloodshed in this room! No rope shall go around his neck as long as I am about, not if I know myself!"

He held a pair of cocked revolvers in his grasp, and the glitter in his eyes showed pretty plainly that he was a dangerous man to be disobeyed.

But, in this instance, he had reckoned without his host.

"I allow ye don't know yourself!" a voice cried, and Ned's arms were firmly seized, twisted around behind his back, and the weapons wrenched from his grasp.

He struggled fiercely to free himself, but it was no use. The miner who had seized him was as strong as a bull; Nickel-Plate Ned could not break or twist away!

"Away with the old assassin, an' string him up!" cried John Jasper, "an' we may as well make a clean job of it by stretchin' the young feller's neck, at the same time!"

"Not while I am around!" cried Chicago Charley, cocking his revolver, "for Nickel-Plate Ned's done nothing to deserve hanging!"

He uttered this protest immediately after one of the masked waiter-girls had approached him, and whispered something in his ear.

The girl in question was the one who went by the name of Garnet.

All was now confusion, for the *habitués* of the gaming-room made a rush at Wilfred Wren, to secure him.

But it was their turn to make a slight mistake.

They didn't know their man!

For, quickly raising his revolver, which was a self-cocker, Wren poured a deadly fire into the ranks of those who would have seized him.

One by one the men dropped, until at last the old man had literally cut his way through to the door, out of which he bounded into the street.

Some of the crowd rushed in pursuit, but when they got outside the doorway of The Elite, their man was nowhere in sight.

He had vanished as completely as though the earth had opened up and swallowed him.

CHAPTER IX.

AT BAY.

THE gamblers and citizens, then rushed back into The Elite, where the burly miner still held Nickel-Plate Ned in custody.

It was a scene of wild confusion.

Seven of the former *habitués* of the place, lay stretched out upon the floor, all severely wounded, their blood forming in clotted pools upon the handsome carpet.

Every one seemed to be in a state of desperate excitement.

"The accursed old reprobate escaped us!" John Jasper cried, furious with rage, "but we'll not be cheated in that way, boys. The ends of justice shall not be defeated, even though the heavens fall. This nickel-plated chap shall fill the other one's place!"

"He shall not!" cried Chicago Charley, who now had a pair of revolvers in his grasp, and whose eyes flashed with the fire of resolution. "Nickel-Plate Ned has done nothing to merit lynching, and I'll undertake to make it sick for the man that lays hands on him, and if that miner, Humbolt Hank, don't release his hands, I'll put a bullet through him!"

"Yes, and I'll back you!"

It was Nola, the waiter-girl, who uttered this declaration, as she stepped beside the proprietor of The Elite, grasping a handsome pair of six-shooters.

Her example was immediately followed by the other two girls, Lily and Garnet, each similarly armed; and to make the group complete, Sandusky Steve, the giant "bouncer" of the establishment, joined their forces.

The array of five determined people, with a shooting capacity of fifty bullets, caused the crowd to stare, while both John Jasper and Maurice Mansfield uttered execrations.

"What do you mean?" the former growled. "Do you defy us, when we've got the odds against ye?"

"We mean that, if you try to vent your spite on an innocent man, which same is Nickel-Plate Ned, there'll be more bodies strewn around this room, than there is now!" Chicago Charley replied, ringingly. "I run this ranch, and you know I never aim crooked. And, now, and for the last time, Humbolt Hank, release the sport!"

The miner gave a growl, and obeyed, but took care to mingle with his own crowd, which were drawn up at one side of the room.

Ned, on being released, picked up his revolvers, and joined Chicago Charley's forces.

"Gentlemen!" he said, coolly, "I did not come to your camp to fight, but I came to stay, and I propose to do it. If you've got any serious objections to my becoming a citizen, now's the time to spit it out, and settle it!"

The crowd did not offer to make an attack, however, for the grim death lurking within the array of revolvers, had no particular attraction for them.

John Jasper and banker Mansfield drew to one side, and held a whispered conversation.

Then, the former announced aloud:

"Very well. You can put up your weapons, and we'll let matters drop. Maybe the young man isn't to blame. Anyhow, whether or no, there's no sense of spilling any more blood, on either side. It's been a bad job at best, and so we'll call it quits."

"Which, I suppose, is equivalent to saying that you will wait until you get a better chance at me," Nickel-Plate Ned suggested, sarcastically.

"Nothing of the sort, sir. If you remain in Sphinx, you will not be molested, as long as you conduct yourself as a good citizen."

"Thank you!" and Ned bowed with comical grace; "thank you, very much."

"You will please remove these wounded men and that dead one; then I shall close The Elite for the night!" Chicago Charley said, "as there's cleaning to do."

"Yes, boys, take out the bodies; then, we'll all have a nightcap at the expense of my friend here, Mr. Mansfield, of Bozeman!" Jasper called out.

It did not take long to carry the bodies outside the saloon, after which the drinks were ordered.

"Will you join us, stranger?" Mansfield asked, addressing Nickel-Plate Ned.

"No, thank you. I do not imbibe."

"Have a cigar, then."

"I do not care to smoke!"

And Ned turned away, to listen to Nola, who was speaking to him.

As soon as possible, Chicago Charley and Steve cleared the room of all the crowd, except Ned and the girls, and barred the doors.

"Oh! I am so glad you escaped!" Nola said, putting out her hand, the touch of which thrilled him.

"And so am I," echoed Lily, likewise shaking hands with him; but her touch did not thrill him as Nola's did; her hand seemed cold and pulseless, to him.

"And I must add that I am also very glad," Garnet added, without offering her hand. "I was so fearful that we could not keep them off!"

"I am sure I am most grateful to you all," Ned assured, "for, but for your interference, they'd have made short work of me, without doubt."

"You can thank my little friend, Garnet, the most of any of us," Chicago Charley said, coming up, and patting her upon the shoulder, "for it was she who enlisted my sympathies in your behalf."

"I am most grateful to Miss Garnet, and to you all," Ned said, "but sorry there was so much bloodshed consequent upon my first visit to your place."

"Well, I suppose it was all unavoidable," Charley said, grimly. "Was the man really the bandit leader?"

"He was. John Jasper, as he is known here, lied when he said the man wasn't Captain Flynn, of the Black Band. Jasper knew he was an outlaw, and was conversing with him when I entered."

"Which looks rather suspicious for Jasper."

"Yes, it does; he is a good man to investigate."

"You intimated that Jasper had another name?"

"So he has. His real name is not Jasper, but Henry Hollis."

As Nickel-Plate Ned uttered these words his gaze flashed intuitively from one to another of the trio of waiter-girls' faces.

Just why, he could hardly have told, except it was to see if either of them recognized the name.

But by no sign or token did any of them betray that they had ever heard the name before.

Ned felt slightly disappointed, for he had a notion that he had met one of the trio somewhere before, and he now concluded that if so, it must be the girl Garnet, who, according to Chicago Charley, had interceded in his behalf.

The sport now announced that he must go in search of Wilfred Wren; so bidding all good-night, he was let out at the rear door of the establishment, and scurried away, taking care to avoid the main street of the town, lest some of the crowd who had been held at bay should be lying in wait for him.

"I am strangely impressed with to-night's adventure," he mused, as he hurried along, "and considering the conversation I overheard between Hollis and Mansfield at the card-table, I believe that I have hit upon the right trail in coming to this town. At any rate, I shall not leave this vicinity until I am satisfied beyond a doubt that my suspicion is wrong. I'd give half of my winnings to see the faces of those three girls at The Elite!"

CHAPTER X.

A ROGUE'S CONFESSION.

AFTER leaving The Elite saloon, Jasper, or Henry Hollis and the Banker of Bozeman went direct to the former's cabin, which was located a few hundred yards from the gaming-saloon, and off the main street, with no other habitations near to it.

Neither of the men spoke until they were seated in the cabin at a table on which had been placed a lighted candle and a bottle of liquor and glasses.

Then they looked each other squarely in the face, with expressions which betrayed that neither of them was in a pleasant frame of mind.

"Well?" Mansfield said, interrogatively, "what do you think about matters?"

"Not much that's favorable, I'll assure you."

"Did you know that outlaw?"

"Bosh! no. I merely said that."

"What was your object?"

"To make Nickel-Plate Ned out a liar!"

"I judged so. He incurred your enmity—"

"At the card table, but not only there."

"You had met him before?"

"Yes. I do not think you recognized him?"

"Eh? I do not understand you!"

"I'll make it plainer, then. You are as much his enemy as I am."

"Ha! I think I see. You take him to be—?"

"Deadwood Dick, Junior, in disguise!"

The banker leaned back and drew a long breath.

"Then, that blonde hair, mustache and goatee must be false."

"Certainly; but most cleverly fixed on."

"I can hardly believe but what you are mistaken!"

"Not a bit of it. I recognized him as soon as he mentioned having been on the track of the man he claimed was the outlaw. That's why I tried to get him lynched."

"Would to goodness you had succeeded! He has fairly escaped us by this time!"

"Never fear. He will hang around Sphinx, and we will trap him yet. That was why I ordered

the men to desist from an attack upon him. We can take him unawares and dispose of him without costing a life."

"How comes it you are his enemy, as well as I—that is, beyond the fact of the poker game?"

"Well, you see, I have suffered a loss through his instrumentality similar to that of yours. Several months ago, before I made your acquaintance, he induced my daughter to elope with him."

"I gave chase, and at last got on their trail, and succeeded in stealing her away from him. I had her locked up, warning her she need never expect to get her liberty until she promised never to try to run away or see the young rascal again. She escaped, however, as I was for the first informed to-night, and at present there is no trace of her whereabouts. I am satisfied, however, that it is in search of her that brings Dick here to Sphinx!"

"Ah! then it is to your daughter he is betrothed to, that prevented him from marrying mine!" thought Mansfield; but he didn't say so aloud.

"Your cause for hating the fellow, then, is identical with my own," he observed; "for I have no doubt but both my daughter Mabel and my niece Madeline have fled in search of him, as they appeared to be infatuated with him. Strange, isn't it, how girls of refinement and intelligence will go crazy over some rough, ignorant scoundrel, far beneath them in everything?"

"Very strange. Curse the fellow! he has not only robbed me of my daughter, but also of yours, whom I had expected to make my wife!"

"And I was agreeable to such a match, too, for, until recently, I considered you a man of good principles."

"Until recently? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have found out so much about you that I would not permit a daughter of mine to marry you if every hair in your head was hung with diamonds."

"And why not?"

"Because, sir, I have found that you have been robbing me."

"Robbing you? By my soul, you astonish me!"

"Do I? I hope the shock will not make you ill. Yes; I have found that you have been deliberately robbing me. You know the fact too well to need any further explanation."

"But I do need an explanation—more, I demand one!" Jasper cried, keeping his anger as much in check as possible.

"Very well. You shall have it, then," the banker responded, pouring out a glass of liquor and swallowing it.

"When you first came to Bozeman, you formed my acquaintance, and suggested that I take you in as a partner, in my banking business, you putting in twenty thousand dollars, for a third interest?"

"Exactly."

"You urged the matter so hard that I finally consented, and made you a silent partner. Afterward you came to Sphinx, and located a claim, which, by its earliest indications, promised to be the claim of the camp."

"I had more than usual confidence in your honesty and judgment, and when you tendered me a half-interest, I purchased it, without ever having given the matter my personal investigation, and paid you a round sum for it."

"Your reports of its increasing promise came to me almost daily; but, finally, you stated that to get at the real heart of the lode, more money would be required to develop it."

"Of course I considered this a reasonable proposition, and sent you the money and not only once, but repeatedly did I respond to your demands."

"I had had experience in developing mines, and knew it often took a power of money to do the work properly, so as to start the best properties into successful production; so I thought little of the matter, but continued to supply the cash in liberal sums, until one day, on figuring up, I was astounded to find that you had not only drawn nearly all of the amount of what you had put into the firm, as your share but a similar amount as my share, to defray the assumed expenses of developing the mine."

"This opened my eyes. I had been too busied with other matters to keep any particular track of my investments here, and I now found you were into me for from between fifteen to twenty thousand dollars. I could scarcely excuse myself for making such a business blunder; but resolved to investigate affairs, and sent a secret agent here to see what sort of use had been made of all this money. Imagine my astonish-

ment, on his return, when he informed me that the claim was worthless, and had never been developed to the cost of five hundred dollars!"

And the banker gazed accusingly at the man, who had literally "taken him in."

"It's false! it's false!" Jasper cried, smiting the table with his fist. "Just wait 'til morning and I will prove it to you."

"It is not false. I arrived in Sphinx early enough to-night, to investigate, and found my agent's report correct in every essential point. Now, then, John Jasper, where is all that money?"

Jasper grated his teeth.

"Where is it?" he growled, his eyes bent upon the floor.

"Really, I cannot tell you. It's gone—scattered!"

"Scattered?"

"Yes!—gone where all the rest of the fortune that I possessed, six months ago, has gone—gone to the devil. You remember the place we just left—The Elite? Well, I dropped nearly every cent of it in there. Not one man got it, but many, and to-night, I am penniless!"

As he finished speaking, the head of the once wealthy mine-owner dropped downward until his forehead rested upon the table, and a groan escaped his lips.

Mansfield gazed at him some minutes without speaking.

At first his face was stern and cold in its expression, but gradually a more pitying look came over it as he saw the ex-mine-owner's form quiver, as with emotion.

"I've never had a day's luck since I sent 'em down the river, or, rather, refused to interfere to prevent their being sent," Jasper muttered. "The boy wished that night I'd lose all my money, and his wish has been answered."

"Come! come!" Mansfield said; "brace up! There's no use of crying over spilt milk. Of course you did wrong in using me as a stool-pigeon to supply your demand for gaming money, but if it's gone, it's gone, and that's all there is of it, and there's no good of my cursing you for it. I'm pretty near broke, myself, but I've got grit enough in me to keep my head above water."

"We have got a mission before us that should impel us to be men of nerve; to search for and find our children, and beat some sense into them. If I find my daughter I know I'll teach her a lesson she will not soon forget."

"And so will I mine!" Jasper, or as we shall hereafter call him, Hollis, asserted. "You are one man out of a thousand, Maurice Mansfield, and if ever I can repay my indebtedness to you, I will do so. And now, let's put our heads together and plan to entrap our mutual enemy, Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN A FIX.

WHEN Nickel-Plate Ned—otherwise, Deadwood Dick, Junior—left the vicinity of The Elite saloon, he kept a sharp outlook ahead, and to the right and left, for he was far from desirous of running into an ambush of enemies.

He had too much work to do in the future to have any desire to be captured just for the romance of the thing.

Before he and Wilfred Wren, alias Napoleon Bug had ventured to enter the mining-camp, they had appointed a meeting-place in a deserted cabin a mile out of Sphinx, and it was toward this that Dick directed his footsteps, for he presumed that Bug had lost no time in getting out of town after laying out the men in the gaming-room.

"I cannot get it off my mind that one of those three girls is some one I know!" Dick mused, as he walked briskly along the little-used trail leading to the cabin. "Of course neither one of them is California Kit, for if such were the case she would have made herself known to me."

"But, the touch of Nola's hand seemed to thrill me, the same as Kittie's did; then the girl called Garnet took so much interest in me that she interceded to save my life. Looks very suspicious."

"Then, too, Nola appeared to take an interest in me, for she prevented my being shot at the card-table. Confound it, I cannot make head or tail out of the matter. I only wish I could find Kittie. We'd give this country the shake mighty quick."

"One thing—I've found Henry Hollis masquerading as John Jasper; and it appeared to me that he is a changed man since he was down

to Bummer's Bar—more gross and villainous. He has parted with all his fortune, I take it, and I took the last of it to-night. My revenge on him for that trip down the river is beginning to look pretty near square. I was surprised to find that he had descended so low as to associate with Flynn and his outlaws. No doubt they accompanied him to this region to get revenge on me, as well as to work their road-agent business."

"They'll have to hustle before they get it, though. Flynn has passed in his checks, and as for the rest of the gang, they'd better keep out of my way, or they'll wish they'd stayed at Bummer's Bar."

A brisk walk brought him to the cabin, which stood in the center of a little dell, down into which the cold October moon sent a ghastly flood of light upon the thin covering of snow.

Who had built the cabin, which was quite a substantial and complete affair, Dick did not know, and cared less.

He and Bug had discovered it, and concluded to take up their abode there, for the present.

The door was open as they had left it that evening, but Dick's call for his partner failed to elicit any answer.

"I reckon the old gent is still hangin' around the town," Dick muttered. "But he ought to be along soon, as all the places are shut up. I'll sit down, and wait for him."

He accordingly sat down in the doorway, and lit a cigar, at which he puffed away, watching the smoke curl up in the clear crisp air.

So preoccupied was he in this, as to be wholly unaware that any one was approaching, until he heard a footstep close at hand.

Looking quickly around, he was astonished to see a woman standing quite near, and regarding him intently.

It was not only one of the "tender sex" his gaze rested upon, but one of the waiter-girls of The Elite.

She had simply thrown a shawl over her head and shoulders, and still wore her mask.

At first Dick could not make out which one of the girls it was, but finally he saw that it was the one called Lily.

When she noted his evident astonishment she broke into a little laugh.

"Good-evening," she said.

"Why," Dick replied, "what in the world brings you here?"

"I followed you," she said.

Then she came nearer, and sat down beside him in the doorway.

"So you don't know me, eh?"

"Why—why, I believe you are called Lily at The Elite."

"Oh! yes, I am Lily there. But don't you know me away from there? Don't your heart tell you who I am?"

Dick could but give vent to a prolonged whistle.

What did this mean?

Was he to be courted by some one he did not know?

"No; my heart has not been to school long enough to learn how to tell who people are that wear masks on their faces," he replied.

Miss Lily evidently did not like the way Dick uttered his reply, for she said quickly:

"You are inclined to be sarcastic, I see. However, I will excuse you, for you no doubt think it immodest and unmaidenly that I should follow you here. You will change your mind, when I tell you who I am, however. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know, I am sure," Dick assured.

"Oh! I know you will be surprised," and she laid one small white hand upon his shoulder. "But, really, I could not help following you. Look!"

A little jerk of her left hand brought the mask from her face.

Deadwood Dick Junior gave a little cry of astonishment as he saw her.

"Madeline Pierce!" he ejaculated.

"Why, of course!" she replied, with a hysterical little laugh. "Oh! Ned, you can never realize how much I have worried about our fate, and at last I could stand it no longer, so fled in search of you. I finally got out of money, and to earn more, in order to pursue my search, I accepted the position at The Elite. Oh! Ned! have you not one word of welcome for me?"

And she gazed into his face, appealingly.

It is hard to say what Ned wished, just then, but it is almost certain that he heartily wished himself out of his present fix.

For a fix he was certainly in.

What on earth had possessed this girl to follow him?

He had never treated her in a way that should cause her to think he cared anything for her. Indeed, sometimes he had treated her almost uncivilly; yet here she was, wanting only a word of encouragement from him to cause her to pour a tale of undying love into his ear.

What was he to do? How was he to avert the threatened calamity?

It was a question that puzzled him, exceedingly.

"Why should I have any particular word of welcome for you, Miss Pierce?" he said, at last. "Indeed, I think I ought to give you a severe lecture for being so foolish as to follow me. Why in the world did you do it?"

"Can you ask me that? Oh! can you ask me that, sir? Have you not known all along that you were all in all to me—that I fairly worship the very ground you walk upon? Oh! Ned, have you ceased—ceased to love me?" and she buried her face in her hands, with a hysterical sob.

"Ceased to love you?" Dick echoed. "Why, Miss Madeline, I never told you that I loved you, nor did I ever give you any reason to suppose I did. What could ever put such a notion into your head is more than I can understand, I assure you!"

"Oh! Ned! Ned! how can you be so cruel? When you were in Bozeman you were so polite and courteous to me that I felt sure you liked me, and I grew to love you with all the warmth of my woman's heart. After you were taken away by the outlaws, I tried to give you up, as dead, but could not, and at last I fled from home with the wild, yearning hope that I would find you, and you would make me your happy wife. And, now that I have found you, you will not cast me off, Ned—oh! say that you will not cast me off!"

She spoke with intense feeling, and to cap the climax, burst into a fit of passionate weeping.

"Well, I'll be kicked to death by jacks of this ain't a fine lay-out!" Ned soliloquized, mentally. "If I'd 'a' thought anything like this, I should have fought shy of Sphinx, or I'm a liar. I wonder what in the world I am to do? If I tell her I can't accommodate her by reciprocating her affection, like enough she'll throw her arms around my neck, and beseech me to take her for better or worse. Now, I don't mind being hugged so much if it's by some girl I like; but I'll be blown if I like this lady-love of mine worth a cent."

Aloud, he said:

"Why, Miss Madeline, I am astonished at you. I don't love you, as lovers love; and besides that, I have no right to make love to any one, as I am already engaged."

"Already engaged!" she gasped.

"Yes, and, as I believe, to one of the dearest girls in all the land."

"But, you shall not have her!" she cried, suddenly starting to her feet—"no! no! you shall not have her. You are mine—my own true love—and no other woman shall draw you away from me. Oh! I know who my rival is, and I know where she is! But, she shall not stand between you and me—not a bit of it! I will see her before I sleep and settle that point. Good-by! I must be going, but I will see you again. Remember, though, that no one has a rightful claim on you but me, and that I will never give you up—no! never!"

She turned then, and walked rapidly away.

Dick watched her, until she had disappeared from view; then, he threw his cigar away, and gave vent to another prolonged whistle of surprise.

"Well, this beats the Dutch!" he ejaculated, as he rose, and paced to and fro, in front of the cabin. "That's the first love-sick maiden I ever encountered, and I hope it will be the last. She's got it all cut and dried, and intends to have me, whether I'll have her or no."

"Now, that's nice—real nice. It's not only nice, but it is romantic. There isn't every fellow who is lucky enough to have the question popped to him, and I suppose I should take that fact deeply into consideration. But, I don't, just as hard. No! Miss Madeline Pierce, you've had your search in vain. There's but one girl in all this land of the Far West that I care for, and that is California Kit. Oh! that I knew where she is to-night. Dead, perhaps, yet I would not—cannot believe it!"

These words were uttered aloud, without his scarcely being conscious of the fact, nor was he aware that there had been a listener to what he had said.

The listener had been positioned just around the corner of the cabin, but, when Dick ceased to speak aloud, and showed no signs of doing so again, said listener stole stealthily away, and took the trail that led toward the mining-town.

CHAPTER XII.

A SISTER'S TREACHERY.

LET us return to Sphinx.

It was after midnight, and the camp was wrapped in repose.

The moon looked coldly down upon the snow-covered ground, and the rude collection of cabins, shanties and tents.

Sphinx, unlike many another mining-town, was not an all-night place, as the saloons generally closed up about twelve o'clock, and silence and slumber held full sway from that time until daybreak.

It was after one A. M. before Madeline Pierce entered the camp, after her visit to Deadwood Dick, Junior, and hurried noiselessly along the main street, toward The Elite.

She had little fear of being seen as no lights were burning, except camp-fires in several cabins, the occupants of which, no doubt, were fast asleep.

But, much to her surprise, before she reached the gaming-saloon, a man stepped out of a dark shadow and confronted her.

He was tall, slim, well-dressed, and his face was almost covered by a heavy black beard.

"Madeline!" he uttered, in a hoarse voice—for she had neglected to replace her mask, and the moonlight shone full into her face.

She started at the sound of his voice more than she did at the suddenness with which he confronted her.

"Mercy! Percy, is this you?" she gasped.

"Yes, it's me," was the reply. "I suppose you did not recognize me with these whiskers?"

"No. Only for your voice I should not have known you. What brings you here?"

"That's more than I know. I am pursued by the bloodhounds of the law, and by the devil. But, don't bother me with questions, yet. I must have whisky to warm me up, for I am nearly frozen. You must get it for me. Don't say you can't for you *must*; I must have it. See! I'm all in a tremor for want of it. I've eaten nothing in three days."

Madeline glanced carefully around her, then said:

"Come with me, but be as noiseless as possible."

She led the way to the rear of The Elite where with a key she opened the door and they entered the gaming-room.

All was darkness, but she soon lit one of the reflecting lamps and motioned Percy Pierce to a seat at one of the tables.

Tip-toeing her way to the side bar, she soon returned with a brimming glass of whisky, which Pierce gulped down with a gusto.

Madeline then sat down beside him.

"You're mighty stingy with your rum," he growled. "Why didn't you fetch on a whole bottle?"

"Wait 'til you get that fairly down before you ask for more. Have you got the money yet?"

"You bet!" and Percy tapped his breast with a significant chuckle. "You heard about it, then?"

"Yes. It was done cleverly. But are you really pursued?"

"Yes. The detectives are looking for me everywhere. I fancy I see or hear one every minute!"

"Then you made a mistake in coming here!"

"Why? Is the old man here?"

"Yes—arrived to-night."

Percy uttered an oath.

"I didn't expect to find him here," he growled, "although I knew John Jasper was here. However, my disguise is so good, that if I keep my mouth shut, there is little likelihood I will be recognized."

"I don't know about that. I'd advise you to go to Cinnabar, or some other camp, where you will be less likely to be discovered."

"Bah! no. I'll be on my guard. Give me another glass of whisky, to wake me up. I feel devilish sleepy, after coming in out of the cold."

Madeline tiptoed once more to the bar, and returned with another glass of liquor, which her brother soon put down.

"You'll get boozy if you drink any more," she suggested.

"Bah! what of it? Who's got a better right?" he mumbled, as he fixed his eyes upon a blood-stain on the carpet. "Been killin' some one around here?"

"Only eight men plugged to-night," Madeline replied, as coolly as though an even dozen mortals took their leave from The Elite per diem. "By the way, Percy, you ought to share some of your money with me."

"Do what?" he growled, glaring at her fiercely.

"Share some of the money with me, of course. I am your sister, and you ought not to leave me unprovided for, when you have got so much."

"To the devil with you! You've got more gall than a wolf. Why should I give you money, even if you are my sister? You are strong, and able enough to earn your own living, and if you can't do it on the square, take the diagonal way, as I did!"

"Percy, I didn't think you were so hard-hearted and cruel?"

"You didn't, eh? Well, you know it now, I suppose. Where's Mabel? Has the old man found her yet?"

"No."

"Curse the girl! I'd not be the man I am now if she had encouraged my suit. And she'd have done it, too, if it had not been for that cuss Neville, or Deadwood Dick, Junior. He got his deserts, however, in a way he little expected."

Madeline made no reply, but sat regarding her brother with a peculiar gleam in her dark eyes.

Percy continued to stare at the blood-stain on the carpet as if it had some peculiar fascination for him, and once or twice his eyes closed drowsily.

"Give me some more whisky," he growled at length, "an' don't be all day about it, either."

"Not another drop," replied Madeline.

"What?"

"Not another drop, until you give me some of that money."

"You won't get me more whisky, eh, until I give ye money?"

"No, I will not."

"You go to thunder, then. I'll get it, myself."

He arose from his chair, and essayed to walk toward the bar; but his legs appeared unwilling to undertake the responsibility of holding him up, for, staggering forward a few steps, he lost his equilibrium, and went to the floor with force enough to jar the building.

He made several efforts to arise, but they were ineffectual, and at last he gave it up, and lay back upon the floor, apparently exhausted.

"You've drugged me!" he gasped, his eyes staring at Madeline, glassily. "You've drug—"

He did not finish the sentence, but continued to glare at her, until, finally his eyes closed, and did not open again.

Madeline had watched, with unruffled composure, the whole proceeding, and when his loud breathing satisfied her that he was asleep, beyond doubt, and not likely, to awaken, she knelt by his side.

Unbuttoning his vest, she took a well-filled wallet from his inside pocket, and carefully counted over its contents, which consisted of notes of large denominations.

"Ah!" she said, "it is all here, and I am the lucky possessor. Now, with all this money, I can buy the love of Deadwood Dick, for, when he knows I possess such a handsome sum, he surely cannot refuse to listen to me."

She smiled confidently, as she arose, and put the wallet securely away in her pocket.

Then, she opened the rear door of the saloon seized her drugged brother by the heels, and dragged him out of doors, where she left him, lying under the shelter of the house, deep in his drunken slumber. Stepping within the room she locked the door, and all was still again.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S TWO CALLERS.

THE next day, the sensation of the shooting affray at Chicago Charley's place became genuine.

The main camp had known nothing of it, before retiring to rest; but, in the early morning the report was heralded to every one, and the excitement over the affair brought the people generally to the street.

Mike Moore, the deputy of the camp, had returned from Cinnabar, and at once set to work to investigate the matter.

The bodies of the men who had been assassinated and of those who had died of their wounds had been laid side by side in an uncompleted store building, and facts enough were elicited to enable him to arrive at a verdict that the deceased came to their deaths from the effect of pistol-shots, fired by a gray-bearded stranger, whose name was said to be Wilfred Wren.

A canvass was then made among the moneyed men of the town for the purpose of raising a reward fund, and this was responded to, quite liberally, so that Mike was enabled to offer a re-

ward of five hundred dollars, for Wilfred Wren's capture.

Five hundred dollars was a big sum, in the eyes of many of the denizens of the camp, who were too lazy to work in the mines; so, getting Wilfred Wren's description, a number of them set forth to hunt him down.

Early in the day a plainly attired, thickly veiled woman left the Mountain Hotel, which adjoined The Elite saloon, and walked toward the upper end of the town.

She had been seen on previous occasions, and was said to be a guest of the hotel, and so little attention was paid to her.

Soon after a similarly rigged female also quitted the hotel, and followed in the direction the first had pursued.

At the lone cabin in the glade Deadwood Dick Junior was just toasting some fresh pieces of meat, for a morning repast, when there came a rap upon the door.

Napoleon Bug, who had returned, just after Madeline Pierce's departure, and who now looked as when Dick had first met him, was engaged in cleaning up his weapons.

"I wonder who that can be?" Dick queried, pausing in his work. "Bug, you go to the door. Maybe it is my very determined lover."

Bug accordingly laid aside his work, and opened the door.

As he did so, the first veiled woman who had left the hotel that morning, stepped into the cabin.

She gave a glad little cry when she saw Dick, who had laid aside his blonde disguise, and advanced quickly toward him.

"Oh, Mr. Neville, I am so glad to see you," she said.

"Mabel—Miss Mansfield!" Dick ejaculated, as he saw her sweetly smiling face—"you here, too?"

"Yes, I'm here, too," she said, putting out her hand, which he took, and shook warmly. "I suppose you have heard that I ran away from home?"

"I did, and was sorry to hear it."

"Believing, of course, that it was on your account I did it?"

"Well—well, I—I—"

"Oh! I know," she laughed. "And you were right in your surmise. It was partly on your account. I thought I was dead in love with you when I left home. But I wasn't."

"Oh! you wasn't?"

"Not a bit of it! It was only imagination, you see. But I am not sorry I left home, for I have got just the nicest lover you can imagine, and he has got lots of money, and he is going to retire from business in a few weeks, and we're going to be married to-night, and we're going East to live, and—"

Here she was obliged to pause for want of breath, while Dick drew a breath of relief.

He had expected that he was about to be treated to another love siege like that of the previous night.

"So you are Garnet, of The Elite, eh?" he said.

"Yes; but how did you guess it?"

"From the fact that you interceded in my behalf last night."

"I thought you suspected who I was, which was one reason that brought me here—to warn you not to give papa any hint that I am in Sphinx."

"It is unnecessary for you to caution me in that respect, as the old gent and I are not on very good terms. But do you not intend to let your father know where you are?"

"Not until I am married, and have some one to protect me from his anger. You see, one thing that made me leave home, he gave me a terrible whipping because I persisted in saying I loved you."

"The brute!" Dick could not help from saying. "He ought to be horsewhipped himself for chastising such a pretty little lady as you. So you are going to marry Chicago Charley, eh?"

"Yes. He is real nice, and he loves me, and I love him. And after we're married he is going to close up the saloon, and we shall go East, where he will engage in some better business. And now, I've come to ask you to be present at the wedding to-night, which will be in the hotel parlor."

"I certainly shall be pleased to be present, in case I can do so without too much publicity," Dick declared. "I can, perhaps, come in disguise, as I have a number of disguises with me."

"Oh! that will be nice. It is going to be a private affair, and only the groomsman and bridesmaid present, besides ourselves and the minister, who is coming all the way from Boze-

man to marry us. You are to be the groomsman."

"Oh! I am? Well, I am seriously afraid that I would make rather a poor one."

"No, you won't! Now you will be sure and come, won't you?"

"I will endeavor to be there. Who is to be bridesmaid?"

"Nola. She is a very nice girl—the one who acted as cashier for you in the game of poker."

"Yes, I know. Have you ever seen her face?"

"No, nor do I know anything about her, except that she seems very nice and has been friendly toward me since she has found that I am engaged to Charley."

"She was not before, then, I infer?"

"No, not very. She was jealous of me."

Dick scratched his head, as if an idea had lodged there, and he wanted to get hold of it; but he made no remark.

"The other part of my errand here," Mabel went on, "is to give you a warning."

"A warning?"

"Yes. The citizens are terribly aroused over the deaths of the men at The Elite last night, and have clubbed together and raised a purse, and Mike Moore has offered a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of your friend, Wilfred Wren. Men are already out searching for him, and I felt it was my duty to come and tell you, so that if you knew of his whereabouts you could give him warning."

"I am very much obliged to you, Miss Mansfield. I presume, however, that my friend will be able to look out for himself."

"I hope so. And now, I must be going. You will be sure to be at the wedding to-night?"

"If nothing happens to prevent, I will be there."

Mabel then drew the veil down over her face, and took her departure, hurrying back toward Sphinx.

She had not been gone five minutes when another knock came upon the cabin door—unmistakably a woman's knock.

"I'll bet that's Madeline!" Dick mused, as Bug got up to answer the summons.

And sure enough, when the door was opened, Madeline Pierce did enter the cabin, her veil raised, and her face flushed with rapid walking.

She looked disappointed when she saw Bug, but paying no particular attention to him she advanced toward Dick.

"You see I am back, don't you?" she said, with a smile full of sweetness, or at least meant to be sweet.

"I see you are," Dick replied, "although I cannot say I am glad to discover the fact!"

"Oh! are you not? Really, now, you're joking. Or, maybe, you have become infatuated with my fair cousin who was just here!"

"I am not infatuated with either of you," Dick replied, candidly. "It is utterly absurd for you to come here, Miss Pierce, with the idea that I care anything particularly for you, for I do not, nor is there the slightest prospect of your making an impression on me."

"You do not love me then after all?"

"I surely do not."

"And you will not marry me after I have searched so faithfully to find you?"

"I will not. That is emphatically 'no, for an answer,' Miss Pierce!"

"Very well!" she said, her eyes flashing vengeance from their depths. "Do you see this?"

She took the wallet she had stolen from Percy from her pocket, and shook it almost in Dick's face.

"I see it!" Dick replied, coolly.

"Well, then, know that it contains a fortune which should have been yours, had you not refused me. This is the money my brother stole from uncle Mansfield—twenty-five thousand dollars!"

"Indeed! How came you by it?"

"I drugged my brother and got it from him. So you see what you have missed. Will you take this money and marry me, or will you refuse it and forever incur my enmity? Now is your time to answer, for if you reject me, you do so for good."

"I am certainly compelled to regard and treat you only as an ordinary acquaintance, Miss Pierce!" Dick replied. "Another young lady already has claims upon me, should I ever find her, and her claims are law, so far as I am concerned."

"Then, consider me henceforth your most bitter enemy, sir! I will work you all the injury in my power as long as I live. I go, now, but beware of me in the future!"

"Before ye go, mum, you'll greatly oblige

ther great Chaw-'em-up firm of Dick and Bug by leavin' thet aire pocket-book behind," cried a voice, and at the same time the wallet was snatched from Madeline's hand, and thrust deep down in one of Napoleon's capacious pockets. "Now, me daisy, ye can trot right along home, as fast as you want to."

"Give me that wallet!" Madeline screamed—"give me that wallet, instantly!"

"Oh! no!" Bug replied, grimly. "You're too young to have so much money. Now, then, you git!"

He had thrown open the door and was pointing out.

"Come! don't make no bones about it, but go!"

"Curse you! curse you!" Madeline cried, fearing to disobey him. "I'll pay you up for this work—I'll have revenge on both of you before this day is over! Curse you!"

She swept from the cabin then in a frenzy of rage, and with a dry laugh Bug closed and barred the door.

CHAPTER XV.

AN ALLIANCE.

THE nocturnal conference between Henry Hollis and Maurice Mansfield, lasted late into the night, and finally ended in a quarrel between them, as a result of which, the ex-banker left the cabin, and sought the hotel, where he had registered, earlier in the evening.

The quarrel had been over Hollis's declaration of his determination to force Mabel Mansfield to become his wife or devote his life to working her ill.

Of course Mansfield became angered at this thrust. One word brought on another, until enmity was openly declared between the two men.

They had come to no blows, and the ex-banker had left for his hotel, for fear that they might get into more serious trouble, which he wished to avoid.

After he left, Henry Hollis did not retire to rest, but sat at the table, grim and sullen, occasionally taking a sip of the whisky.

"Yes, the money is all gone, and I'm no better than a beggar!" he would occasionally mutter. "Mansfield is down on me, and I needn't expect to worm another cent out of him. Gods! If I could get possession of his daughter, wouldn't I bleed him—for I'm satisfied he has got plenty of money, yet! I must get money, but how? All the means I have of getting it is by shoving up this diamond of mine, or by selling my watch. I'll not do that—I'll murder some one first."

"Good Heaven! what a fall a man can have in a few short months!"

When mid-forenoon came, he still sat at the table, looking if anything in a more unenviable frame of mind than when Mansfield left him.

Two empty whisky bottles sat before him, but though he did not appear to be drunk it could not be otherwise than that he was considerably affected by the vile stuff.

He made no effort to rise and leave the cabin, but sat staring grimly at the floor, evidently reviewing his situation, and looking upon the dark side of it.

If Satan had come along, just then, he would have found an easy victim, for the speculator was a fit subject for temptation.

And Satan came!

Not in his mythical shape, with horns, tail and cloven-foot, but in the guise of Miss Madeline Pierce.

She did not pause to knock, but pulling the latch-string, opened the door and entered, uninvited.

Henry Hollis glared at her with a scowl.

"What do you want here?" he demanded coarsely.

"I want to see you. Do you not recognize me?" and she drew a stool near to him, and sat down.

"No, I don't recognize you!" he replied, wiping his watery eyes. "Ah! I see. You are—"

"Madeline Pierce—your friend!"

"How my friend? Because you have learned that I am broke?"

"Yes."

He laughed, hoarsely.

"That ain't likely," he allowed. "That ain't generally the time when friends make their presence known, my dear."

"Nevertheless, it's the time when I make my presence known, sir. I judged, last night, that you had lost your last money, and so I thought I'd come around and see you."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Two things—assistance, and revenge!"

"Humph! Who do you want revenge on?"

"The fellow who called himself Nickel-Plate Ned, at the saloon, last night, but whose other handle is Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Ah! What do you know of him?"

"I know that I was foolish enough to follow him here, in the belief that I loved him. I proposed to him, and he rejected me. And now, I hate him as I never hated any one before."

"And you want revenge on him?"

"Yes, I do! Oh! I could see him strung up without a bit of pity."

"Well, young woman, you couldn't have come to a better party than me. I hate the young cuss every bit as much as you do, if not more, and I'm willing to help you what I can."

"You can help a great deal. Besides, there's money in it, for both of us."

"How?"

"Well, you see, Deadwood Dick took a handsome sum of money away from The Elite, last night?"

"Yes."

"And this morning, he, or rather, his partner for him, robbed me of a wallet containing twenty-five thousand dollars."

"The deuce you say!"

"No, I don't. You heard what I said, and I didn't mention deuce."

Hollis smiled, and she added:

"Altogether, Deadwood Dick must have in his possession, nearly forty thousand dollars."

The eyes of Hollis sparkled, greedily. "Forty thousand dollars, eh? That's a good sum."

"Of course it is. And if you will kill Deadwood Dick, and secure the boodle, half shall go to you and half to me."

"It's a bargain. Twenty thousand will set me nicely upon my feet, again. But, where did you get the wallet containing the amount you say Dick took from you?"

"From my brother. Have you heard of the robbery, at Bozeman?"

"Yes. Mansfield told me."

"I supposed he had. Well, Percy came to me during the night, to get whisky. I drugged it, and relieved him of the money. This morning, I went to Deadwood Dick to see if the money would not induce him to turn his affections to me, but he positively refused. Then, my love turned to hate, and that's what brought me here. They snatched the wallet from me, and would not give it back."

"Where is Deadwood Dick?"

"At a cabin, off the main trail, about a mile from town."

"And you say he has a companion?"

"Yes—a big, gaunt, bummy-looking man, with a big Roman nose. If he was dressed better, and had a white beard and hair, he would look like the man who did the shooting at The Elite."

"No doubt he is the same chap, only he was disguised, last night!" Hollis said. "This matter must be attended to, at once."

"Yes, for the deputy-sheriff of the camp has offered a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of Wilfred Wren. But if he is captured, we may also lose Deadwood Dick."

"If we play our cards right we can secure that five hundred dollars, also," Hollis said. "Now let me think a moment."

But he was at this moment interrupted by a loud knock upon the door.

"Open it!" he said to Madeline, gruffly.

She obeyed, and a roughly-dressed man entered—one whom she had never before seen, with bristling, yellowish beard, and his hat pulled down so that it was hardly possible to see his eyes.

He paid no attention to her, but strode forward, and sat down on the stool Madeline had just vacated.

"Good-mornin'!" addressing Hollis. "You're Henry Hollis, ain't ye? You've got yer whiskers shaved off, since I saw you last, but I know yer."

"Yes, I'm Henry Hollis. What do you want?"

"I come to see about the capt'in."

"He is dead!"

"So I've found out. Ther boys wants to know what is to be did under the circumstances. There ain't no money in the treasury, an' they don't know what to do."

"That's nothin' to me. What do you come to me, for?" Hollis demanded in fierce temper.

"Cause the boys thought maybe you'd like to fill Flynn's place as captain. We can't do much without a leader."

"No, I don't want to fill his position of captain!" the ex-mine-owner declared. "I'm no outlaw. However, I have a job to be done, and

if you fellers want to tackle it, for ten dollars apiece, you can have it."

"All right. As a gang, we're purty near broke, and we can't afford to refuse even trifles. So I'll answer fer the boyees. What's the job?"

"There's two parties I want captured. They're both at a cabin near here, and by surrounding the cabin it will be an easy matter to capture them. When they are secured and bound I am to be left alone with them for a few minutes, after which I will turn one of them over to you, and give you a chance to square a debt of vengeance."

"What! you do not mean upon Deadwood Dick?"

"Exactly! Dick, and no one else!"

"Then I'll guarantee it's a bargain. We boys won't want any better satisfaction than to get a hold upon him. We'll make him suffer for the crescent brands he put upon us, and then kill him, tho' killin' is too good for him."

"You can do as you please with him, as long as he never gets free to trouble any one again."

"Oh! we'll look out for that!"

"How long will it take for you to get the gang together?"

"Not over half an hour."

"Then go at once, and I'll meet you half a mile up the trail, where the old trail crosses it, three-quarters of an hour from now!"

CHAPTER XVI

IN TROUBLE AGAIN.

AFTER the departure of Madeline, Deadwood Dick and Napoleon Bug ate their humble repast of meat with relish, for neither had had anything to eat recently.

"That air gal she took the cake!" Bug said, with a grimace. "Peared like she war bound to git married whether any one wanted her or not."

"I don't believe she's exactly level in the upper story," Dick replied. "She's a spiteful minx, though, and may make us trouble."

"Bosh! What can she do?"

"More than you imagine, maybe. She said men were searching for you, and she'd give us away should she meet them."

"Do you think she knew me?"

"Yes. Undoubtedly she recognized you as Wilfred Wren, for she gave you several sharp glances."

"Confound it! We ought to have kept her here."

"That would have done but little good. If Vigilantes are out in search of you they will be pretty certain to visit this cabin."

Wren looked anxious.

"Then, it is likewise pretty certain, that, first I know, I'll be a prisoner?" he interrogated.

"I am afraid so, unless you skin out. My advice to you would be to buckle on your armor, and get up and git while there is time. Of course, if you choose to stay, I'll stand by you, as far as lies in my power; but you know we are but two, and the enemy may come by the score."

"But, supposing I should go, what would you do?"

"Don't fear for me; I'll look out for myself."

Bug deliberated several minutes, and finally said:

"I don't know but what you are right. They'd most likely string me up without mercy, if they caught me, and I've no desire to pass in my checks yet awhile. I don't like to leave you, though, for you've shown yourself a true pard to me!"

"Never mind that. Your own welfare is your principal lookout now. I wouldn't like to see you stretch hemp, and that is the reason why I advise you to go."

"Well, I will go, but not far. You may get into trouble, and if you do, I will be near to help you out."

He then buckled on his belt, seized his rifle—for both he and Dick had brought rifles with them to the cabin—and then, after bidding Dick good-by, took his departure.

Dick cleaned up his weapons, having first barred the door of the cabin.

"Something tells me I'll have occasion to use these before the day is out," he mused, "and so I'll have them ready for business. If any one comes nosing around here, with a view of making me trouble, I'll endeavor to illustrate to them that there is more power in powder and ball than there is in any other sort of argument known to the civilized world."

When his weapons were all in trim he opened the cabin door, and took a good look around the neighborhood.

But there were no signs of an enemy around the timbered edges of the glade.

"Things look all blooming," he muttered; "but there is no telling whether they are or not. There's one thing pretty sure—Madeline Pierce has got her dander up, and she will try to work me some mischief, and will be sure to try to get the money back. And, that reminds me, that there is a large possibility something may happen in the course of time, and it isn't quite the thing for me to have so much money about my duds. Should I be captured, my enemies would appropriate whatever they got hold of, and it behooves me to put the most of the money away, so that those who take so deep an interest in me cannot get a grab at it."

He cast sharply about him, and after a few minutes found a large flat stone in front, and about a dozen yards from the cabin.

Crowding nearly all the money he had about his person into the wallet, he pried up the stone, placed the wallet under it, and then carefully let the stone back in its place.

Providing he had not been seen doing this, he could scarcely have chosen a safer *cache* for the money, which, in amount, summed up to nearly forty thousand dollars.

"If nothing happens, part of that shall go to Mabel Mansfield, as a wedding present from—her father," Dick muttered, as he took his way back to the cabin.

He replenished the fire inside, so that it would burn for hours; then he closed the heavy oaken shutters over the two windows, went inside and locked and barred the door.

"Now, let 'em come," he muttered. "I'll wait here till night, and if nothing happens by that time, I'll go to Sphinx and attend the wedding."

But, something was destined to happen, as he soon found out.

He had not been in the cabin half an hour, when he heard the sound of human voices, coming from the direction of Sphinx.

Peering through a loop-hole, of which there was one in each side and end of the cabin, Dick was enabled to see the approaching party, who were but a couple of hundred yards away, and to make out that they numbered eleven men, besides Henry Hollis, who was in the lead.

The slouch hat of each man of the party, except Hollis, was pulled down to his eyebrows, and Dick had no difficulty in recognizing several of the men as former residents of Bumner's Bar, which gave him the impression that these men were the branded jurors, or, as they were more latterly known, the Black Band of Bozeman.

"So, so!" he muttered. "I am to receive a call from the outlaws first, am I? Well, that's nice. And Henry Hollis is their leader. I wonder what Kit would say if she were here?"

Procuring his rifle, Dick cocked it, in readiness for use at an instant's notice.

It was a fourteen-shot gun, and he knew he could make that repeater talk in strong language, if it became necessary.

When the outlaws reached the front of the cabin, they paused and held a consultation.

Then several of them made a tour around the house, probably to see if there were any more doors, but there were not, and so they returned.

Finally, Henry Hollis advanced, and rapped loudly on the door.

"Come! open up," he cried, in a loud voice.

Dick made no answer, for he was resolved to keep quiet for a time, and see if they wouldn't go away.

Dick's failure to open the door caused Henry Hollis to utter an imprecation, and he pounded louder and longer.

"Hello! in thar!" he yelled. "Be you going to open the door, or ain't you? Ye needn't think by keepin' still that ye can fool us, for you can't—not a bit of it. We know you're in there; so open up, or we'll smash the door down!"

"What do you want?" Dick demanded, seeing it was no use to remain silent.

"We want you!" Hollis replied, "and we want t'other feller, too—and what's more, we're goin' to have you, so you might as well surrender at once."

"The word 'surrender' ain't in my spellin'-book," Dick replied. "What do you want of me?"

"Oh, there's a party of gentlemen out here as would like to see you on a matter of business."

"Well, they'll have to call during business hours, then, for I do not transact any business until after dark. I know you, Henry Hollis, and the gang who backs you, and I warn you to get away from this cabin and leave me alone, or I will make some of you bite the dust, you

can bet! I am well armed, and mean what I say."

"We're not afraid of you, not a bit of it. If you don't open the door and surrender, we'll bust the door down!"

"Bust away, if you like; but remember, I shall undertake to shoot down every mother's son of you that crosses the threshold!"

There was no reply to this threat, but Dick could hear the gang holding a low consultation outside.

Finally he heard part of the number move away.

Where were they going?

Dick hardly needed to ask himself this, for he at once suspected what was their errand.

They were going for a battering-ram.

"Oh! we'll fix you when we get you!" Hollis cried out savagely. "There'll be one less scallawag in the country after the gang gets hold of you!"

"They haven't got me yet!" Dick replied. "If you come here, Henry Hollis, in expectation of capturing Wilfred Wren, allow me to inform you that that gentleman took his departure some time ago."

"Bah! you lie! You can't fool me. He was seen here this morning."

"By Madeline Pierce, I suppose?"

"Well—yes."

"It is true; he was here, but he is gone now."

"We'll soon see, when the boys return with the ram."

"They'd better batter their brains out with it, and save me the trouble and expense of using my ammunition. By the way, Henry, I believe you have not found your daughter yet?"

"No, curse her! and it won't be well for her when I do find her. One thing is certain—you will never see her again!"

"I am not so sure about that!" Dick retorted. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip, you know, and I ain't a dead Dick yet, by a long shot. So don't be too sure, Henry. Kit and I may meet and marry yet, in spite of you!"

"Not very likely," was the grim retort, "for here come the boys, with the battering-ram."

Dick hurried quickly from one to the other of the loop-holes, hoping to get a shot at the outlaws; but soon found that was out of the question, for they were already too near the cabin, for him to get a bead on them.

It was but a couple of minutes until they arrived in front of the cabin door, and he heard them drop a log on the ground.

Then there was another consultation, and Dick thought some of the outlaws were talking angrily to Henry Hollis, but could not tell for certain, as all hands were too near the cabin for him to get a peep at them.

Finally, Hollis rapped on the door again.

"Come! in there!" he cried, "are you going to surrender?"

"Nary a surrender!" Dick replied, promptly. "I'm but one to ten of you, but I'll never surrender until captured!"

"Then, boys, down with the door, and we will see if he won't surrender!"

The next moment, there came a thump against the door, that fairly made it tremble.

It was constructed of strong oak plank, heavily hinged, and doubly barred; but the blow of the battering-ram was a tremendous one, and it looked decidedly as if a few more of its kind might burst the barrier in.

Dick took up his position at the further side of the room, opposite the door, with his rifle firmly clutched, ready for instant use, in case the door should give way.

Again the crash came with terrible force, and Dick saw that the blow had started the hinges.

A couple more such attacks would, in all probability, burst the door in.

The third blow forced the hooks that held the cross-bars in position, and the bars fell to the floor.

"Once, again, and you'll fetch her, boys!" Hollis cried, encouragingly; "and, mind you, the minute she caves, rush upon the young cuss and secure him before he can do any damage!"

"Yes, do!" Dick muttered, grimly, "and if I don't make some of you bite the dust you can call me a Piute."

Once more the ram was thrust against the door, with increased force.

The hinges burst from their places, the door trembled a moment, as in a spasm, and then fell inward with a crash.

Instantly the outlaws poured into the cabin, in a swarm, and with vengeful yells, and, disregarding the blaze of fire and death that burst from Deadwood Dick's rifle, they rushed bodily

upon him, and by force of numbers, bore him to the floor.

In almost less time than it takes to tell it, he was securely bound, and a prisoner!

The outlook for him, now, was indeed bad!

CHAPTER XVII.

HOLLIS'S DOOM.

WHEN Dick had been secured there was a loud hurraing in the cabin, over the victory, notwithstanding three of the outlaws had fallen, never to rise again.

The unerring aim of the young Deadwood Dick had snuffed out their candle of life, most effectually, and there were now but six of the original jurors of Bummer's Bar, left.

"Hurra! we've got ye, now, me daisy!" cried one of the number, who rejoiced in the name of Bullfrog Bijé, from the fact that he was passionately fond of the meat of the frog. "You'll not escape us, now, and we will guarantee that yer won't escape us, *this time*! We'll roast ye by inches, same as ther Injuns used ter do. Ye branded us, purty nice, but we'll brand you nicer, wi' red-hot irons."

"Yes, your rope has run out, to its end!" Hollis announced, gazing at Dick with a diabolical smile.

"What do you think about your chances of marrying my daughter, now, you scoundrel?"

"My intentions are just as good as they ever were," Dick replied defiantly.

"Well, my gay lark, I presume you will find your chances are mighty thin, before the Black Band gets through with you. They've got it in for you, and you need not expect mercy from them."

"No one ever heard me beg for mercy, from any human being, let alone from such human hogs."

Hollis turned to the outlaws, without paying any attention to Dick's remark.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "I congratulate you on your victory. Although you have lost three of your number, it is a victory to be proud of, for you now have vengeance right in your hands and I trust you will settle the young ruffian's case, so effectually that he will never trouble anybody, again!"

"You bet we will!" Bullfrog Bijé declared, grimly. "We'll take him to our new headquarters, and have a sweet revenge for the job he put up on us, you bet!"

"That's right. And, now, according to our bargain, if you will retire a dozen yards or more from the cabin I will have a short private conversation with the prisoner, after which I will pay you off, and you can go."

"Supposin' ye pay us off now, boss?" Bullfrog Bijé suggested.

"I will do just as I agreed!" Hollis replied, haughtily. "You need not fear but what you will be paid, even more liberally than I promised."

The men exchanged glances; but Bijé led the way from the cabin and all followed.

Hollis watched to see that none of them lingered within earshot; then he knelt beside Dick, who lay upon his back, on the floor, and glared into his face with a diabolical smile.

"Oh! but the Black Band will fix you!" he declared, with a chuckle. "You won't run off with any other man's daughter, right away."

"Maybe not!" Dick answered unflinchingly. "It won't be well for you, you scoundrel, if I ever do get free, however."

"That don't worry me the least. There's no probability, whatever, that you ever will get free, in this world!" Hollis retorted with savage satisfaction. "And as for your prospects for the next, they are still slimmer. Now, then, if you have no objections, I will relieve you of your fat little boodle—both the money you raked in at The Elite, and what you robbed Madeline Pierce of. Of course you will not need the money, where you are going, as U. S. money don't pass there; so, rather than let so much cash go to waste I will take charge of it, and act as your executor."

"Go ahead!" Dick replied, coolly. "You'll find half a dollar in my pants pocket. If that will do you any good, you are a thousand times welcome to it!"

Hollis uttered an oath, but said nothing more, until he had completely searched Dick, and, of course, found nothing to reward him for his pains, except the half-dollar Dick had mentioned.

"Ten thousand curses!" he hissed. "Where is that money?"

And he laid his grasp upon Dick's throat.

"I haven't got it!" Dick declared, expecting nothing but what theirate ruffian would choke

the life out of him; nevertheless, he resolved to die game.

"Where is it? where is it?" Hollis cried in his fury. "Tell me, or I'll choke the life out of you."

"I haven't it!" Dick repeated. "Go ask Wilfred Wren where it is. You're a fool to think I'd keep so much money about me!"

"Curse you! Where is Wilfred Wren?"

"You're asking me more than I can tell you. I do not know myself!"

"You accursed scamp!" the baffled man gritted, "I'll choke you, anyhow, for fooling me. The Black Band shall not have you!"

He set his teeth together hard, and his grasp tightened about Dick's throat, till the youth's eyes bulged from their sockets, and he grew purple in the face.

A few seconds more would have ended his life!

But he was not destined to die in this horrible manner.

There was a quick rush into the cabin, and the would-be strangler was jerked away from his intended victim, to find himself surrounded by the Black Band of Bozeman.

"Oho! So *that* was your game, was it?" Bullfrog Bijé cried, covering Hollis with his revolver. "You wanted to cheat us out of our vengeance, did ye?"

"No, I didn't!" Hollis growled.

"Then, what war ye chokin' our prisoner fer?"

"Because I couldn't help it. He infuriated me by not telling me something I wanted to know."

"What did ye want to know?"

"That I do not choose to tell."

"Oh! don't yer? Now, looker heer! You've bin tryin' ter play me an' ther boys crooked!"

"Yes, he has!" Dick declared, faintly. "He had an idea I had a large sum of money, and wanted to rob me of it so you fellers wouldn't git it. He searched me and found all I had—only a half-dollar. That made him mad, and he said he'd choke me anyhow!"

"Ho! ho! So *that* was yer lay, was et?" Bullfrog Bijé growled, while the other outlaws glared at Hollis, savagely. "Ye thought ye would collar the heft o' the boodle, an' then pay us a paltry sum fer what we hev done!"

"Well, what of it?" Hollis returned, sullenly enough. "I made a bargain wi' Jim Lawler, and I intended to stand by it, and you needn't have expected more."

"Ye intended to, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Then, don't ye intend to now?"

"How can I? I have not a cent in the wide world, except the half-dollar I found in the boy's pocket."

"That's none of our business. We want the money you promised us fer doin' the job."

"I haven't it. I depended on getting money from the prisoner, which he cheated me out of at cards to satisfy your demands. You ought to be satisfied with my putting you onto how to capture the boy."

"But, we ain't though. What we want is the lucre, and if you don't fork it over, we'll fix you up for a funeral, and don't you forget it! Eh? boys—ain't that the ticket?"

"You bet!" the other five heartily responded in a chorus. "The cheatin' cuss has got to come ter time, or we'll stretch his neck fer him."

"But, do have reason!" expostulated Hollis, growing pale with alarm. "I haven't any money—you can search me—nor can I raise any until I return to Sphinx, when I can get enough to pay you off as I promised to do. Now, that's fair, I'm sure!"

"Not a bit of it! You've made a pack o' tools out o' us to serve your own ends, and you've got to stand the consequences. You're a scaly cuss at the best, and your loss to the community will never be felt. Boys, go for him!"

The five outlaws, of whom Bullfrog Bijé had evidently assumed command, leaped upon the baffled speculator and bore him to the floor, where he was securely bound, hand and foot.

One of the men carried a lasso at his belt. The noosed end of this was shirred around Hollis's neck, and he was dragged from the cabin, mid screams of terror and piteous appeals for mercy.

There was a tree a few yards from the cabin, and Deadwood Dick Junior well knew this would be the scene of the execution.

He heard the doomed man's cries for several minutes; then there was a shout of—

"Heave, oh!"

—and the cries were heard no more.

"That's the last of poor Hollis!" Dick mut-

tered, a cold chill running down his back. "I almost wish he had choked me to death, for the promise in store for me is that my torture will be as devilish as man's ingenuity can conceive!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROPOSAL TO GO INTO BUSINESS.

The six surviving members of the Black Band did not return to the cabin for the matter of ten minutes, and Dick's curiosity became considerably aroused over their delay.

Finally, however, they re-entered and removed the bodies of their former comrades to the outside.

Again they were absent for some little time, during which Dick concluded they were burying the bodies.

After a while they returned, and drawing a stool near to where Deadwood Dick lay, Bullfrog Bijé became seated, while his companions formed themselves into a group just in his rear.

Dick could hardly understand this action at first, but decided that they meant to try to tantalize him, and gloat over the fact that he was in their power and at their mercy.

This impression, however, proved incorrect.

"Well, young man, we fixed him!" Bullfrog Bijé said, with a hoarse chuckle. "And he won't try ter play monkey games here below again!"

"Yes, we did him up brown," Bijé went on; "and yer givin' him away kinder gained a pint for ye, in our favor. O' course, we allow you've did us a injury that would make any man yer deadly enemy, an' we orter skin ye alive, an' roast you besides. Don't you think so?"

"No!" Dick replied quickly, a faint hope entering his heart that there might still be a bare chance of his saving his life. "No! for you made me your enemy when you found me and California Kit guilty, and all I did in the way of vengeance was to mark you so I would know you if you ever bothered me again. I could have killed the lot of you at Bummer's Bar if I had wanted to."

"You could, eh?"

"I certainly could."

"Why didn't ye do it, then?"

"Because I did not want to. I had branded you with the Crimson Crescent, so that I was satisfied you could not get it off, and my revenge upon you for your unfair verdict was complete."

"You emphasize the word 'you.' Do you mean to say any one else could remove these brands from our foreheads?"

"Any one could—who knew how."

A look of great eagerness came over the features of the outlaws.

"Could you remove the brands?" Bijé demanded, excitedly.

"Probably not. The stain upon your foreheads is made by the juice of a wild mountain berry. I learned the secret of a Piegan Indian nearly a year ago. There is but one thing that will remove the stain of this juice; but I do not know even what that is, without hunting up that Indian. He never told me what it was, although he would were I to ask him, for I once saved his life, and he thinks a heap of me."

"Where is this Indian?"

"Ten days' ride from here to the south, if he still lives."

Bullfrog Bijé was silent for a minute, then he said:

"Well, younker, we boys hev had a consultation, an' hev concluded to take ye to our new camp, an' put an end to ye, except ye wante come to our terms."

"Your terms?"

"Exactly. Ye'er a nerry sort o' chap, an' thar ain't many as hev more grit than you have. I kin see that at a glance."

"Much obliged for your compliment," Dick replied. "I believe I have got about my allowance of pluck, though I don't make a practice of bragging about it."

"That's what we kinder like about ye. Of course we orter not let sech matters come 'twixt us an' our vengeance; but, we've been talkin' things over, and come to ther conclusion we won't split up till we've made our pile."

"Well? What's all this to me?"

"Well, ye see, ef we hang tergether, we want some go-ahead feller to fill the place o' Cap Flynn, who war killed last night. We don't want no one but what's got grit, an' an eye fer bizness. Thet same we allow you've got."

"Now, yer see, ther stage thet runs 'twixt Chico an' Cinnabar are carryin' a heap o' gold an' greenbacks lately, fer Chico aire pannin' out better an' better every day. Ther's a big chance fer stage-tappin', wi' respects o' fat returns. Then, too, every train leavin' Cinnabar carries

an express box, containin' a small fortune. See?"

Dick nodded.

"I understand," he said. "You mean to start thoroughly into the road-agent business."

"Exactly. There's just enough of us, if we had a chap who feared neither man nor devil, ter take the lead. So now, ef you wante join us in thet capacity, an' will sw'ar ter be loyal, an' ter try an' remove these brands from our foreheads, we aire inclined ter let up on ye, an' make ye one o' us—all ter share in ther spoils, and share alike. Now, then, what d'yer say?"

Dick remained silent for several minutes.

"I ain't anxious to pass in my checks yet awhile, I'm mighty sure," he spoke, at length, "and as for becomin' a road-agent, I don't know about that. I was always brought up honest. I s'pose if I refuse you'll kill me?"

"Yes, for unless you took an oath of loyalty, we wouldn't be safe ter let ye run loose. No! Ef ye don't want to accept our proposition, ye kin bet you'll be a corpse before another sunrise."

Dick deliberated again.

"How long time will you give me to make up my mind?" he asked. "It strikes me that, maybe, I'd like that sort of life, after all."

"We won't give ye no time here, as it ain't safe to hang out here any longer. We shall start for our stronghold at once. On the way is Thede Thorpe's tavern. We'll stop thar fer whisky. So ye can have till we git thar ter make up yer mind."

"Very well. I presume I shall conclude to join you."

CHAPTER XIX.

CALIFORNIA KIT TO THE RESCUE!

SOME five miles from Sphinx, to the westward, upon a stage-trail, was a cabin.

It was not a large affair, and was roughly constructed, and there were no other habitations nearer than a couple of miles.

"Yet, despite this fact, a creaking tin sign was suspended from an iron arm, above the door, announcing that the place, was 'Thede Thorpe's Tavern.'"

In front of the 'Tavern', was a watering-trough, hewn out of a log, and which was supplied with water from a neighboring spring, by a series of leading troughs.

Stages coming up or down the trail, made it a practice to halt here, in order to water the horses, and give the passengers a chance to liquor up, for which accommodation Jehu invariably got his whisky free.

Lone travelers, too, sometimes stopped over night at this wayside inn; but they were strangers, for no one informed of the ill-repute of the place would have thought of spending a night there.

It was known that fully half a dozen people had put up there, for the night, whose whereabouts could not afterward be accounted for, and it was not known how many others there were to swell the list.

But as no one had as yet made any fuss about these disappearances Thede Thorpe kept on running the place and selling bad 'bug-juice' to whoever came along. The number was not few, as the stage and horseback travel was considerable, along that particular trail, to and from the upper mines.

Thede Thorpe was a brawny, swarthy individual, with jet-black eyes, hair and flowing beard, and he always dressed in a suit of black broadcloth, with white shirt and collar, diamond jewelry, a high hat, and patent leather shoes.

His manners were ever polite, and his address showed that he had received a good education.

In the prime of life, and quite good-looking, after a fashion, it was often a mystery to those who saw him, why he had thus isolated himself from the camps around him.

For it seemed evident that he could not be making a fortune out of the place.

This fact, coupled with the singular disappearance of several of his guests, had cast a shadow of suspicion upon him that he was a "bad man."

During the forenoon that witnessed the capture of Deadwood Dick, Junior, Thorpe was seated by the fireplace, in his rude barroom, smoking his pipe, when the door opened, and two persons entered.

The first was rather below medium height, clad in a mud-splashed suit of corduroy, with stogy boots upon his feet, and a slouch, bullet-riddled hat upon his head.

His hair was of yellowish color, and the huge beard that covered nearly the whole of his face, was of a like hue.

The second person was none other than our friend, Napoleon Bug, otherwise Wilfred Wren. Both walked up to the bar, and Bug, slapping down a ten-dollar gold piece, cried:

"Give's some whisky! fer we're drier than sawdust. Some good stuff, now, too, mind ye—no rat p'izen."

"Certainly! certainly!" Thorpe assented. "I never keep anything but the best of liquors."

He set out the bottle and glasses, and the new customers each poured out a small drink.

Thorpe took the gold piece, and turned to a drawer to make the change.

When he turned around again, two cocked six-shooters were staring him in the face, held in the grasp of Bug's companion. The lone tavern-keeper, was "covered!"

"Up wi' yer hands!" Bug ordered, "an' mazourky right out from behind that bar. Make no attempt to draw a weapon or you're a dead man!"

"What the deuce is the meaning of this?" Thorpe demanded, obeying the order, however.

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"We want to run this she-bang, for a little while, if you've no objections!" Bug replied, producing some straps.

"What do you want to run this place for?"

"Well, ye see, there's a pack o' road-agents a-comin' along, pretty soon, and we want to scoop 'em in. Ef you act civil like, no harm will come to you. If you don't, you'll get yer cocoanut cracked. Give us your hands!"

Thorpe hesitated, but seeing that the revolvers still covered him, he allowed Bug to bind his hands behind his back.

"This is shabby treatment!" he cried.

"Nary a shabby!" Bug declared grimly. "I'm ther great cyclonic cavortin' Chaw'em-up from Chico, an' ef ye get unruly, I'll chaw an ear off'm you quicker'n lightnin'. I'm passionately fond o' souse, too. Thar, now, yer flukes aire fixed up all right; so right-about face an' come along wi' me!"

"Where to?"

"Oh! up the mountain-side, where ye won't frighten the visitors we expect along purty soon. When we scoop 'em in, ef ye behave well, ye can come back an' run yer old tavern, jest as ye please. Come, now, jest like a little man, fer et won't do ye no sort o' good to refuse."

Thorpe evidently realized this fact, for he followed Bug from the tavern as meek as a lamb.

When they were gone, the comrade of Bug restored the weapons to his belt, and began to examine the bottles behind the bar.

All contained water except one large black bottle, labeled "whisky," and then two-thirds full of liquor.

Taking a half-pint flask from his pocket, the man poured its contents into this bottle and then shook the mixture well together.

"That'll fix 'em!" he chuckled. "Twenty minutes after they drink a glass of that, they won't know what's struck 'em! And this"—he here drew a vial from his pocket—"will bring 'em to their senses about as quick as the other stuff put 'em to sleep, so the racket will work both ways."

Having thus made his preparations, the man went to the door and gazed down the trail. Some distance away he saw a cloud of dust rising in the air.

"They're coming," he muttered. "If my plan works, all will be well. If not, I'll use powder and lead, for the stake is too big to lose it."

He looked to his revolvers, and then re-entered the tavern.

Within fifteen minutes, a cavalcade of horsemen rode up, and dismounted.

They were the remnant of the Black Band of Bozeman, and the young Deadwood Dick was with them, with his hands bound behind his back.

He was assisted to dismount, and then, the whole party entered the tavern.

"You go stand over there, at the fire!" Bijé ordered Dick, "and while we're takin' a drink is yer last chance to decide whether ye'll come to our terms or not."

Dick obeyed.

He had already made up his mind, that, rather than die, he would join these men; but would elude them, and escape, no matter what sort of an oath he might be required to take.

He would be sharply watched, of course, after becoming a member of the band; but if he was not smart enough to make good his escape he did not want his liberty, he argued.

Bullfrog Bijé and his pals proceeded to range themselves alongside the bar.

"Hillo!" Bijie cried, surveying the bartender, grimly. "Who be you, an' whar's Thede Thorpe?"

"The boss has gone out on a little tramp up the mountain, an' I'm left ter mind ther she-bang, 'til he returns," was the reply. "Whisky, boyees?"

"On course! You jest tell Thorpe about this—et's on me, Bullfrog Bijie. Thorpe he knows me, an' et'll be all right."

"Correct," the bartender replied, which seemed to please Bijie immensely. "I don't know about his custom, but I suppose et's all right."

"Oh! sart'in, it's all right. Thorpe lets us Bozeman Boys hev all we want, 'case he knows we're good pay. Down goes the bug-juice boys; then we'll hev a six-handed game o' keerds an' thet'll give ther younker time to make up his mind!"

The brimming glasses were emptied almost at a gulp; then the outlaws seated themselves at a table.

"Fetch us keerds, bartender!" Bijie ordered, "and I will show these fellers they don't know how ter play; I'll take the brag all outen 'em."

The bartender complied with the request, and the six began their game of poker. In a few minutes, however, their tongues became thick of speech; yet each felt hilariously happy. Then, as it were in a moment their heads dropped forward, and they were silent in profound slumber.

The drug surely had done its work.

As soon as the outlaws were oblivious, the bartender advanced to Deadwood Dick Junior, and cut his bonds.

"You are free," he announced. "Now help me bind these ruffians, before they recover consciousness."

"Of course I will!" Dick assented. "But, tell me, who are you, that you have thus befriended me—what is the racket, anyhow?"

For answer, the bartender seized the hair and beard and tore them from his face—the face of a remarkably handsome girl.

"CALIFORNIA KIT!" Dick fairly yelled, in an ecstasy of delight, and the next instant the two were clasped in each other's embrace; two loving hearts were reunited, while there was an osculatory performance of the most impressive and hearty order.

"Oh! Kitty! Kitty! where have you been so long? I have searched for you until I grew afraid I should never see you again."

"When I was first missing, I was kidnapped at the instance of father by yonder outlaw band and held a close captive in the mountain cabin where you and Bug were afterward taken. I finally escaped, traced your adventures in Bozeman, and heard that you had been very attentive to Mabel Mansfield, which made me jealous, and I went to Sphinx, and entered Chicago Charley's employ in disguise."

"As Nola?"

"Yes."

"Then, that accounts for how I was thrilled when your hand touched mine. But, go on."

"Well, I recognized you when you came to The Elite, and resolved to keep watch of you. I have shadowed you ever since. I overheard both of Madeline Pierce's interviews with you, and also that of Mabel Mansfield."

"I overheard Bullfrog Bijie's proposal to stop here, hastened to Sphinx, got some drugs put up, and came on ahead of the Band. On my way, I met Wren, and he volunteered to help me."

"Where is he?"

"Up the mountain, holding the tavern-keeper in charge."

"You know of your father's fate?"

"Yes, but I was powerless to prevent it. The outlaws were too many for me to tackle. I am very sorry for him."

"And, I guess, by this time you will have come to the conclusion that you can trust me?" Dick queried.

"Yes, indeed! I shall never doubt your constancy, Dick. As we pledged ourselves to each other, so will we live, and if you—were—to—"

"Say the word, we will be married to-night," Dick finished, for her.

She did not answer in so many words, but a loving kiss was answer enough.

At sunset, that evening, such people as were upon the street of Sphinx were treated to an unusual sight.

Marching into the camp, six abreast, came six hatless, roughly-dressed, coarse-bearded men.

As they came opposite The Elite Saloon, they halted, and the crowd of astonished citizens which had quickly collected perceived that the six men were lariatied together, and that upon

the forehead of each was a vivid crimson crescent.

Directly in the rear of the six men, marched two persons, each carrying a cocked repeating rifle, ready for use.

One was Deadwood Dick, Junior, in his dashing disguise of Nickel-Plate Ned; the other was California Kit, rigged out in a neat suit of male attire, including patent-leather boots, and a jaunty slouch hat, pinned up on the left side.

With her hair flowing in a wave below her shoulders, and her eyes sparkling with triumph, she looked inexpressibly dashing and charming.

When The Elite was reached, Deadwood Dick ordered a halt; then, turning to the crowd, he said:

"Gentlemen of Sphinx, I have the honor of renewing your acquaintance. Can you tell me where I will be apt to find the deputy-sheriff of this camp?"

"I'm that chap!" Mike Moore said, stepping forward.

"Then, sir, permit me to turn over to your custody the last remnant of the notorious outlaw gang, known as the Black Band of Bozeman, who were captured at Thede Thorpe's today, by my friend here, assisted by myself!"

Great excitement immediately ensued. Dick and Kit became the hero and heroine of the hour, and were wildly and enthusiastically cheered and thanked, and some one grew so excited as to propose Dick for mayor of the town on the spot!

A few more words, only, are necessary to close our tale.

Mabel Mansfield was married that night, in the parlor of the hotel, and Charley Chartiers, or Chicago Charley, was the man to whom the prize was awarded. After the wedding, Mr. Mansfield was apprised of what had happened, and, like a sensible man, he concealed his disappointment, and congratulated the happy pair.

Dick also presented him with the money Percy Pierce had stolen, half of which the ex-banker at once presented to Mabel, as his wedding gift.

Dick and Rolla Hollis, or California Kit, were also married, that same evening; and when this reached the ears of the citizens, they all united and tendered the happy couple a rousing serenade on tin pans, and other noise-producing instruments.

The six outlaws were taken from their place of confinement that night, and the next morning their bodies were found hanging to limbs of trees, two miles from Sphinx.

The body of Madeline Pierce a day later, was found in a lonely place, with a bullet wound in her head.

Had Percy killed her in his rage at her treachery? That was the general opinion; but the wretch was not discovered; he had fled as if to shut out the horror of his monstrous crime.

The body of Henry Hollis was treated to a respectable burial; after which Dick and his bride left for the sunny clime of southern Arizona, where the pair proposed to make their home.

Charley, Mabel and Mr. Mansfield came East, as also did Wilfred Wren, now no longer the wandering vagabond. His vengeance appeased he became himself again, and so may he remain to

THE END.

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98 William Street, New York

TWO REMARKABLE HEROES.

The Deadwood Dicks, Senior and Junior, are the Gentlemen.

There Have Already Been Eighty Volumes Published Relating to Their Astounding Courage, Coolness and Skill.

In only one sense of the word can it be regarded as a novel statement when the fact is here recorded that literature has given many heroes to the world, and perhaps more than one reader will have to think a moment over this remark before the subtle delicacy of its genial wit strikes home.

But it is most essentially a half dime novel statement that will be news to many when it is added that literature, if traced from the dimly distant days when Adam was a mere child down to the present day, would show but few heroes that in the eyes of boyhood would be even judged worthy of comparison with the two greatest heroes known to American literature, or, to promptly reveal them, Deadwood Dick and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Perhaps if everything were known of his career in bookland, Robinson Crusoe would rank above any hero ever offered to the boys of the world, for Robinson made his appearance a long time ago and his adventures have been translated into pretty nearly all the languages that are printable; but while Robinson is and ever will be a worthy personage, he is, it is to be feared, most decidedly a back number in the eyes of several millions of the boys and young men of to-day.

And then, too, Robinson's reputation was made and safely anchored to leeward at a time when competition in the manufacture of heroes of juvenile literature was so slack that it is scarcely worth mentioning. Had he postponed his debut until to-day, Robinson would have had to hire a press agent, of the very objectionable type known as a hustler, and even with that assistance the odds are that he would have experienced a severe frost.

Robinson, like many other bygone characters calculated to thrill the juvenile mind, labored under the disadvantage of having only a comparatively few adventures, and he was further very heavily handicapped by having to confine his adventures within the narrow circles of probability and common sense. The modern heroes of fiction for young America, who are now as countless as the sands of the sea, and of whom the Deadwood Dicks are much the most important, are not so hampered by any such confined conditions, and with the bars let down admitting them to the boundless expanse of the utterly impossible, it is but natural that their unnaturalness should bear away the palm of popularity, and such as Robinson be left far behind in the race.

Therefore the statement of the surpassing prominence of the two Deadwood Dicks having been so emphatically made, it will be as well to justify the emphasis with some facts about their history from a bookseller's point of view, before plunging into the seething vortex of their recorded lives.

Deadwood Dick made his first appearance before the public in 1877, under the auspices of Beadle & Adams, the William street publishers of popular literature for the masses, and for fourteen years he or his son has been reappearing at intervals, which were at first irregular, but they have now settled down to a basis of once in six weeks.

It was in 1885 that Deadwood Dick the elder made his final appearance after thirty-three volumes of adventure, and his son, Deadwood Dick, Jr., who had been growing up in them for many years, took up the running, and has kept it up to the tune of very nearly fifty volumes more in the six years that have passed since his remarkable father was buried.

During the fourteen years they have been on the market these stories have been sold at five cents a volume, and the circulation they have attained throughout the length and breadth of the land, has been in the aggregate something truly vast, for the entire series is kept constantly in print, and many of the early issues are now enjoying a sale of their twenty-seventh or thirtieth edition.

It can be easily believed, therefore, that the two Dicks are so firmly engrafted on the tree of popular literature for boys and young men, that their position is assured so long as their author can keep it up, and that they stand to-day head and shoulders above all rivals in the eyes of the public for which they have lived, and for which one of them has died.

American boyhood, and that is a tremendous factor in the land, now knows Deadwood Dick, Jr., a good deal better than it knows its catechism, and millions of young minds absorb the thrilling incidents of his career in his everlasting warfare against crime and his never-ending solving of impenetrable mysteries.

Millions of boys follow his stealthy footsteps as he tracks his vicious victims to their undoing, and then, when the victims are thoroughly undone, the millions wait hungrily for the next volume, which on every sixth Tuesday appears with the certainty of the Tuesday itself, and a new set of delightful thrills go thrilling away from Maine to California.

Mr. Victor, the courteous editor for Beadle and Adams, who told *The Evening Sun* what it wished to know about the history of the two Dicks, said that he had often had his attention called to what

are known as Deadwood Dick clubs, which are organizations consisting of from three to a dozen boys, who take turns in buying the Deadwood Dick novels as they appear, and reading them in rotation, so that in the case, for instance, of a club of six members, each member would be kept thoroughly informed of his pet hero's latest doings, at a cost of only five cents once in thirty-six weeks, while when nine of these economical young enthusiasts pool their issues in the same direction a nickel will serve the purpose for a whole year.

Mr. Victor, in his curious and interesting task of editing this phase of the literature of the day for one of the most extensive publishing houses in the business, has weighed the question carefully, and finds that a volume once in six weeks is just about the amount of Deadwood Dick, Jr., that his countless admirers can comfortably absorb and digest.

In England, too, this extraordinary series of eighty volumes telling of the doings of father and son has been republished for years, to the infinite delight of the boys and youths of Great Britain and the solid satisfaction of the London publishers that had the pleasure of thus getting square with America on the piracy question.

"When I received the first Deadwood Dick story," said Mr. Victor, "I was struck with the freshness of the author's style, and after tining it down a little sent it to the printers. The story made a hit and I accepted another and another until we found that the character was becoming unusually popular among our patrons."

"I kept urging the author to make the stories less terrifically forcible in the language of his rougher characters, and gradually the sulphurous nature of their dialogues became moderate enough to need but little editing, and at the same time the torrents of liquor that flowed like rivers through his earlier manuscripts, dwindled to rivulets under the influence of my appeals for less rum."

"The author urged the absolute truth of both the language and the amount of whisky-drinking that he attributed to his characters, but I begged in the interests of morality that the flow of both one and the other be curbed, and of course the stories were none the worse for his doing so."

"Deadwood Dick, himself, was also gradually reformed and changed from the outlawed terror of the law-abiding to the deadly foe of the law breakers, and when once that transformation was achieved his subsequent course in the path of virtue was an assured success."

"True, the path was a somewhat rocky, bloody and dangerous one; but no one who follows him along its various ups and downs can doubt its virtue, and from that virtue he never deviated."

The full and official list of the titles of this remarkable series would fill at least a column of *The Evening Sun*. It contains some real gems in the way of names calculated to attract the youth in search of a thrill. For instance there is Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross. A Wild, Strange Tale of the Leadville Mines—of Men of Steel—of Toughs and Tigers—of Road-agents, Regulators, Avengers, Adventurers, and of the Thrilling Life in the New Eldorado.

Can any one deny the comprehensiveness of that or his probable power of seducing nickels from the pockets of novel-reading boys? Then there are a number of delightfully alliterative titles, such as Deadwood Dick's Defiance, or, the Double Daggers, and Deadwood Dick's Double, or, the Ghost of Gorgon's Gulch. Particularly fetching, too, in their forceful effect on the small boy's pocket money must be Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop Up; Deadwood Dick's Dead Deal; or, Captain Crackshot, the Girl Brigand; Deadwood Dick's Death Trail; Deadwood Dick's Death Plant, and Deadwood Dick's Diamonds. In the selection of localities for his adventures Deadwood Dick, Jr., shows far more desire for variety than the old man ever did, for he has volumes that relate his remarkable doings in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, Rochester, Buffalo, San Francisco, Denver, Galveston, Leadville, and even at Coney Island. The titles of the younger hero's volumes show that he met with and got the better of swindlers, bunco men, counterfeiters, bank robbers, horse thieves, smugglers, pirates, stage robbers, and, indeed, pretty nearly every sort of criminal known to the police, while his father confined himself almost exclusively to rooting out the Western type of bad men. Progress has, therefore, a worthy representative in Deadwood Dick the younger.

It is surely not necessary to add that in the moderate compass of a newspaper article, only the merest shadow of justice can be done to the careers of any heroes that have had such an extraordinary collection of stories as that written about them. If a month or so were given to a careful reader for the task, he might, with the assistance of a double-entry bookkeeper, tabulate the number of blood-curdling episodes that occur in the eighty volumes, together

with the exact number of persons who are shot, stabbed, hanged and removed in sundry less conventional borderland ways, such as being tossed into quicksands, burned in the tops of forest giants, fed to bears or made to try and walk on tight ropes across bottomless chasms.

The final summary would be something appalling in its gory magnitude, and would form a record of slaughter that would shame the battle of Gettysburg, but it might prove a source of entertainment to some idle person of a sanguinary turn of mind, and so the idea is suggested here.

The variety of duels in these stories is another source of wonder to the reader, and it must be acknowledged that Mr. Wheeler has as prolific an imagination as it is possible to conceive. Every volume of the series fairly bristles with episodes of a nature that makes those related in the more ordinary 10-cent or 5-cent stories seem as mild as hotel milk, and hotel milk has been pronounced by scientists to be the mildest object in nature.

In coming face to face with the notes of a variety of episodes and adventures in the books which the writer made as he hurriedly went through the eighty volumes, and which he hoped to utilize in this article, an overpowering sense of having bucked up against the impossible rears its dread front and mocks the man who dared to face the task of doing justice to the subject.

Once or twice a flowing beaker of mexie, or nerve food, has been tossed off, and with grim determination the struggle made to sift the material on hand and condense it into something like a reasonable shape.

With a heartfelt sigh the colossal task has, however, been reluctantly abandoned. There are the eighty volumes each so crowded with thrills and heart-tugs that it were madness to hope to do justice to them collectively and rank injustice to discriminate between them. The three larger pictures illustrating this article have been selected at random from eighty just as interesting, and the smaller ones are porraits of Deadwood Dick, his wife, Calamity Jane, and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

To abandon the idea of giving a few extracts from their lives causes infinite pain, but if once a start were made in that direction, it would be cruel to *The Evening Sun's* readers to stop, and it is therefore better not to relate one single adventure. Suffice it to say that the stories are clean and well written, and until the glut of gore and supernatural courage and success of the heroes becomes indigestible to the ordinary mind, there is much amusement to be found in adventures of the Deadwood Dicks.

The small boy and his larger brother have minds attuned by nature to absorb the music of the constant flow of villains' blood and the never-ceasing cracking of rifles and revolvers that keep the silence in a perpetual state of unrest throughout the Deadwood Dick series, but it is not so with a more mature mind, and unless you are a small boy or a youth prone to admire the terrifically heroic in literature, you are advised not to purchase the entire eighty volumes, but to try a sample here and there from the list. If you are a small boy, or the other fellow you doubtless know more about it than the writer, and so don't want any advice on the subject.

As a parting tribute to Mr. Wheeler, the owner of the brain that has evolved and continues to evolve the most popular boys' stories of the day, it is but fair to add, and an interesting fact as well, that he has also found time to dash off some novels about Cloven Hoof, the Buffalo Demon; Bob Woolf, the Girl Dead-Shot; Death-Face, Detective; Old Avalanche; Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand; Jim Bludsoe, Jr., the Boy Phoenix; Buckhorn Bill; Gold Rifle, the Sharpshooter; Rosebud Rob; Nugget Ned; Idyl, the Girl Miner; Photograph Phil; Canada Chet; Watch-Eye; Jack Hoyle, the Young Speculator; Gilt-Edged Dick, the Sport Detective; Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport; Bonanza Bill; Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks; Solid Sam, the Boy Road Agent; Captain Ferret, the New York Detective; New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective; Nobby Nick of Nevada; Wild Frank, the Buckskin Bravo; Fritz, the Bound Boy Detective; Snoozer, the Boy Sharp; Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado; Cyclone Kit, the Young Gladiator; Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; Denver Doll the Detective Queen; Turk, the Boy Ferret; A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-taker; Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; Kell-y, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia; Little Quick Shot; Kangaroo Kit, the Mysterious Miner; Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood; First-class Fred; Yreka Jim, the Gold Gatherer; Nabob Ned; Cool Kit, the King of Kids; Bicycle Ben; Wrinkles, the Night Watch Detective; High Hat Harry, the Baseball Detective; Sam Slabsides, the Beggar Boy Detective; Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detect ves; and Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.

He may therefore be pronounced the Storyteller from Storytellersville, and the Deadwood Dick stories will be his towering monument.